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# TOWARDS THE DAWN

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CONOR GALWAY

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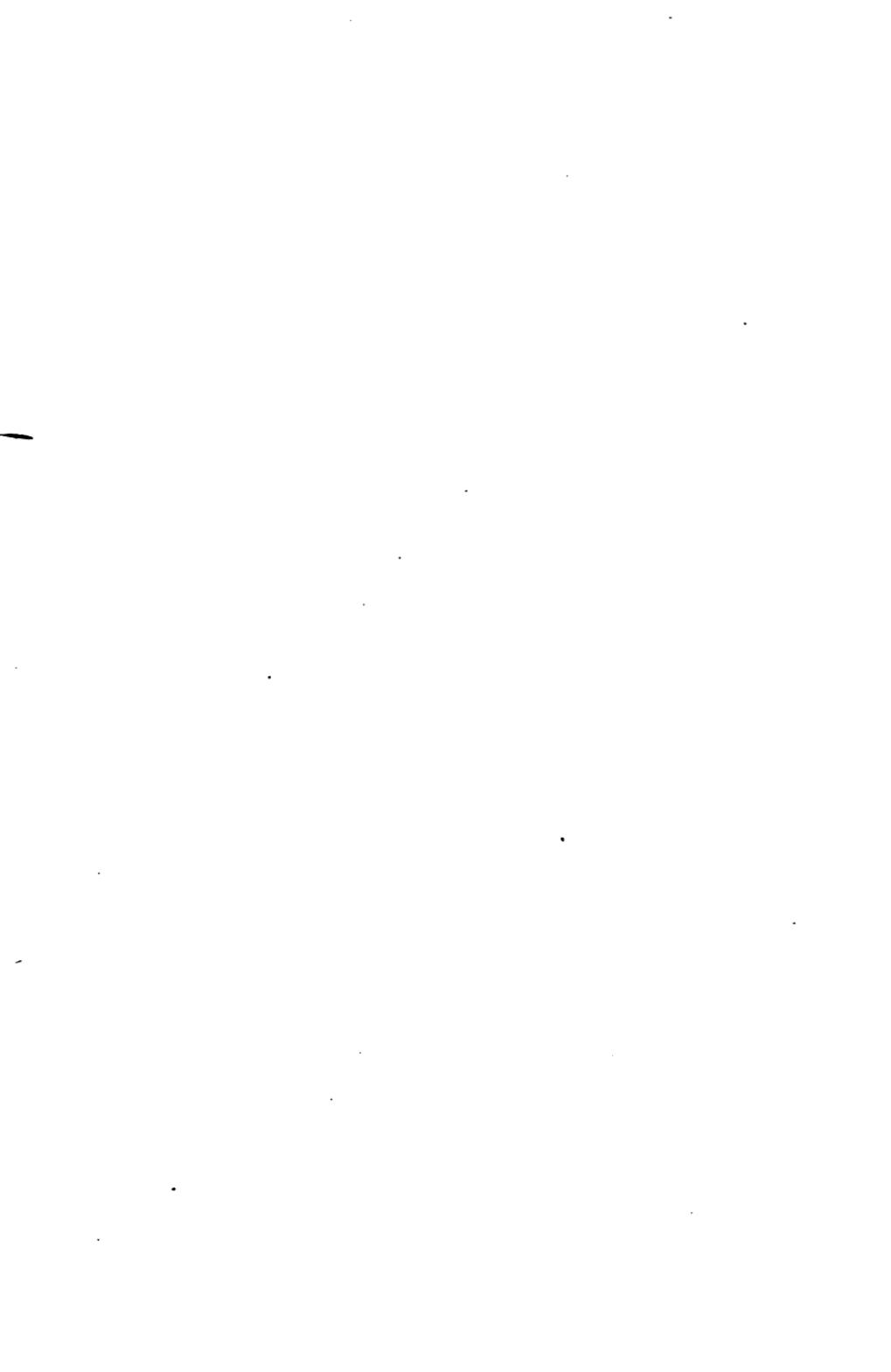
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**TOWARDS THE DAWN**



# **TOWARDS THE DAWN**

**BY**  
**CONOR GALWAY**



**NEW YORK:**  
**FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY**  
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**TO THE  
QUEEN OF MAY**

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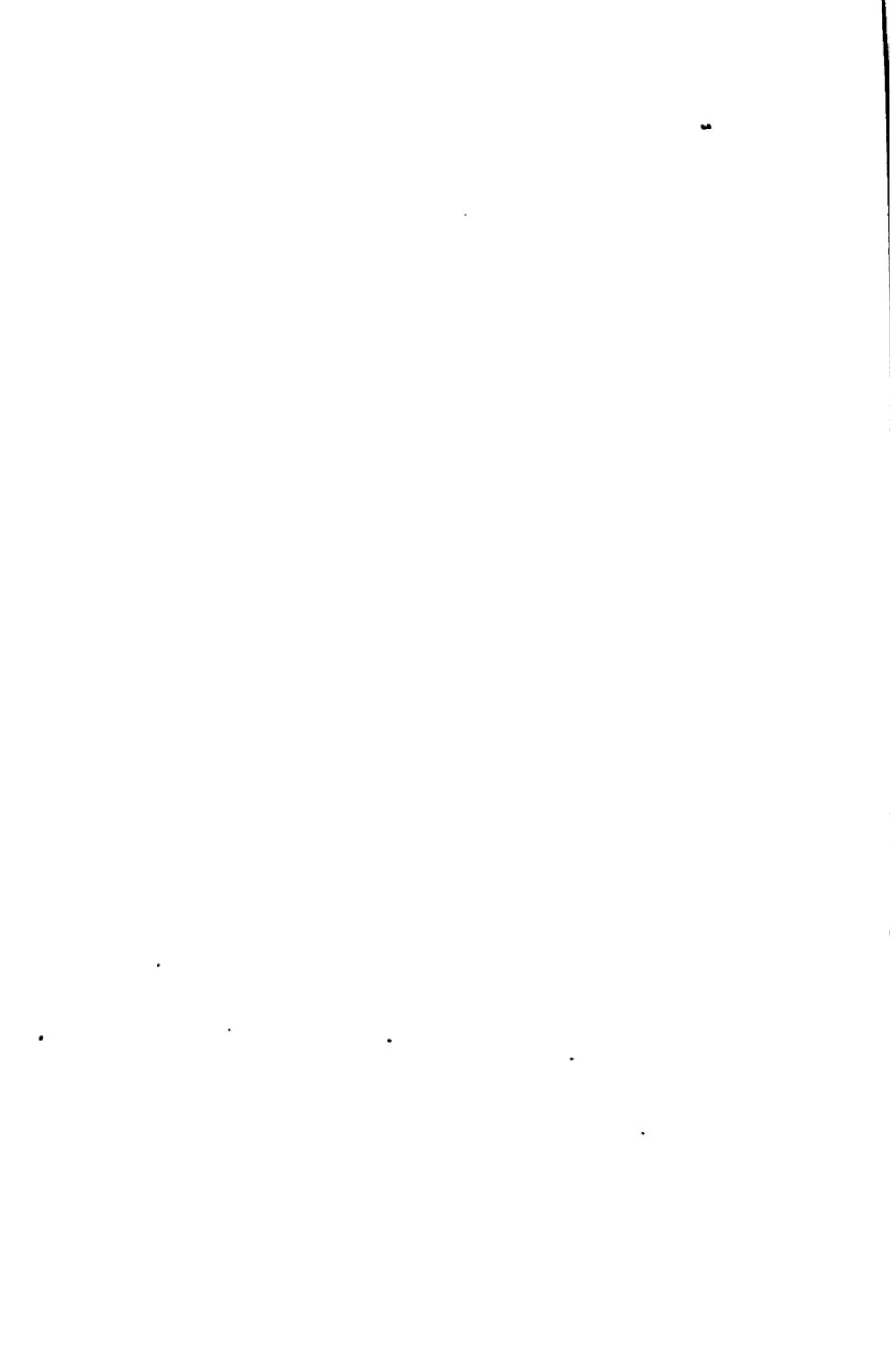
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## PART I

(RECAP)

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# TOWARDS THE DAWN

## CHAPTER I

FROM the moment when the flush of dawn trailed its last golden streaks across the window panes of Clonell, till now, when the glow of evening transformed them into so many twinkling, red-gold eyes, it had been, climatically speaking, a typical Irish day. All day long great lumps of grey, pale grey, dark grey, grey that merged into black, had been floating in an innocent blue sky, gliding away at times to leave only fleecy, fringy white masses of loveliness in their stead, and again clumping together to throw the world beneath them into dimness and gloom. Now it was a maze of blues tinged with silver, purples that fast became gold or pink and again greys that changed into motley beauty with bewildering rapidity.

The lovely wilful uncertainty of the heavens had had little effect on the inhabitants of Clonell this August day of 1908. Probably not a soul in the town had remarked in them aught but the signs of coming rain. But then there were not

over many souls to remark anything. Being the fifteenth, and hence a holiday for the Catholic portion of the population, the younger folk had all gone off to Warrenpoint on the Hibernian excursion, and those of other denominations had been absent at work in the linen mills outside the town. There had been little business doing, in spite of the holiday, and the putting up of shutters and closing of shop doors simultaneously with the return of the workers made a welcome stir.

Clonell might be classed among the prosperous of the northern provincial towns. It boasted a spinning mill employing some three hundred hands, most of whom lived in the quarter of the town known as Barracktown, because of the proximity of a disused soldiers' barrack, a relic of less peaceful days. Still, it could not be termed a mill town, for Barracktown was a quarter apart. Clonell preferred to think of itself in connection with its golf links and four banks—the latter with their attendant coterie of interesting but ineligible swains ; and perhaps, secondly, as being a good market town with shops and hotels second to none of their kind.

As in every other town of its class in the North of Ireland, religion was a sad worry. There were many different sets in Clonell. They began at a halfpenny as mill workers and reached threepence halfpenny as small mill owners and bank managers

and solicitors and doctors. The solicitors and doctors did not always arrive at three pence half-penny, it is true, but where they had wives the desperate efforts of the latter ended in success as a rule. There were a few county people, but they are so few in Ireland that they are of little or no account except in their own estimation. To come back to the religious worry, Inwardly, the professional class made little of it. If they touched on religion at all in mixed company, it was in gilded terms acquired by long practice. The Catholic members of such company knew perfectly well the bigotry that lay beneath the polished surfaces of their non-Catholic friends, but it made no difference to them. Professionals were not so plentiful as mill workers, and it would have been impossible for them to mix with social unequals. The threepenny lot consisted of big business people. They were all Protestants and formed a small unanimous clique given to Sunday tea-parties and socials, and altogether of profound respectability. (In Ireland non-Catholics of any denomination are called Protestants, though in reality the greater part of the non-Catholic population in the north is Presbyterian and Methodist.) Twopence half-penny was the price of the fry of small shopkeepers. These drew a thick black blind between the creeds, Catholic and non-Catholic. They were neighbourly enough, but mixed rarely except to pay

their respects to the dead. Outwardly courteous, they were inwardly suspicious of each other. It was the same with the farmers of the surrounding districts who patronised the town. From twopence downwards only, was their frank, outspoken hostility.

In most of the northern counties the Catholics are in the majority, but the non-Catholics have the money and good positions. It was so in Clonell till Willie Gibson started his spinning mill and made a point of keeping it exclusively anti-Catholic. The imported workers made a nice balance, that had a sequel in dividing the town into two quarters, which the inhabitants were wont to call "the Protestant part and the Catholic part." Only about ten Catholic families remained in the former quarter, and of these John Gallagher, the proprietor of a small book and stationery business in High Street, was the most important. It had taken long years and much financial aid from loyal Orangemen to oust the others, but John, the son of an old Land Leaguer, who had his house bought out, was a man the most daring Orangeman deemed it healthier to leave in peace.

Though it was past the closing time of the bigger business houses, John Gallagher's busy hours were yet to come, seeing that his shop was the meeting-place of the intellectuals, characters

and men gossips of Clonell from eight o'clock till midnight. Towards it a slip of a girl was wending her way this August evening. She was at the gawky stage, not yet fourteen ; on the borderland between childhood and girlhood ; longing yet hesitating to step from one to the other, and painfully self-conscious of this uncertainty.

Clad in an indifferently made cotton frock and white pinafore, the clank of the iron tips on her semi-fine boots as they struck the pavement resounding through the street, she felt and looked ungainly. But she had one redeeming feature, in which an onlooker would have forgotten all other defects. Swinging as she walked, here in great wide waves, here in tiny ripples, hung a wonderful cloak of that coarse brownish red hair so common among the women of Ireland. There was no beauty in the face beneath it ; just a small tip-tilted nose, a rather square, firm chin, a somewhat large, sensitive mouth and the delicate, freckled, shell-like skin which so often accompanies reddish hair. The big muddy eyes reflected only the troubled self-consciousness of her gait. She paused at the shop window, apparently to study its contents, which she knew to a pen or an india-rubber ; in reality to ruffle a curl at her forehead and twitch the unbecoming pinafore into more graceful lines. This done, she entered.

“Hello, Dympna ! ”

This salutation came from a boy seated astride the counter, a book lying before him.

"Hello," responded Dympna evenly. "Where's your father?"

"He'll be here in a minute. I'm keepin' shop."

"Quare lot of keepin' you're doin'," she remarked laconically.

They both spoke in the monotonous even accent of the North, so despised by those natives who can manage to gild it with the shrill intonation of the foreigner, but so compellingly fascinating to the ears of those unaccustomed to it.

The boy laughed good-naturedly. "Not much doin' right enough. Never saw such a quiet fifteenth; everybody's away on the excursion. Did your Uncle John go?"

"No. Why?"

"Some say he joined the Hibernians, thinkin' it would do the trade good."

"I didn't hear him say anythin' about it," she answered carelessly.

"There must be somethin' in it," the boy continued thoughtfully, "because a good many of the Hibernians are dealin' with your mother lately. They're not up to much here in the North, but those labourin' fellas have the money comin' in regularly, and they spend it too. Now, there's the farmers; they get everything on tick, and when they get in the money once or twice a year most of them

can't bear to part with it until they can't help it ; and when a shopkeeper has to lie out of his money, I tell you it isn't a paying job. John Donnelly wasn't asleep when he joined the Hibernians ! ”

“ You seem to know a mighty lot about it,” sneered Dympna, for want of a more cutting retort. She was not over fond of her Uncle John, but she regarded a reflection on one of the family as a reflection on herself.

“ I suppose you heard somebody sayin' that and you're lettin' on it's your own,” she added.

He hastened to defend himself. “ I'm not lettin' on, it's my own ; sure you can hear any sane man sayin' the same thing any day,” and he flung back his curly head and squared his shoulders.

His hearer laughed derisively, but he went on, nothing daunted. “ Around here they're just fellas who are out to make trouble whenever they can ; the sort that couldn't be content with a quiet gathering. They can't think for themselves, because they're just the type who never think in any country ; the day will come when one or two of the educated crowd who join them for their own ends will make them either the devil of a nuisance or a great help to the country. My father doesn't think they will ever do much good seein' they're that same devil of a nuisance now,

with their rowin' and fightin' with the Orangemen, instead of ignorin' them and their bigotry."

"The Orangemen are as bad as they are," retorted the girl defiantly.

He laughed shortly. "They're worse. If the Hibernians are a boisterous crowd they don't keep up spite long, but the others are black and deep inside. Oh, they'll not say much, but they'll do a Catholic a bad turn if they can ; and they're all hand in glove, high and low, and us—sure we don't stick together against them at all ; dealin' in Orange shops, and electin' Orangemen to every position goin' ; keepin' them on the fat of the land, and where will you find the one that would leave a penny with a Catholic ? "

"Mother has two Protestant customers," said Dympna proudly.

"Two ! " he cried in disgust. "And there's Daniels with a couple of hundred Catholic ones, and Willie Gibson, his brother-in-law, would see a Catholic dead sooner than let him into the mill. It's the same every place else too. I heard Tommie Whelan sayin' that the time he got work in the shipyard in Belfast, they put a dab of white paint on the heel of his boot when they found out he was a Catholic, and a week after that he had to clear out. Man ! but they gave him the devil of a time. If he'd stayed on another week he'd have fallen—accidentally—into a dry dock and broken his

neck. My father minds when they put a Catholic worker into a barrel of tar. Bah ! Who could have patience with the lot of them," and black eyes flashing, he sprang off the counter as his father entered.

The resemblance between John Gallagher and his seventeen-year-old son was very marked. Both were of medium height, and the same slight, well-proportioned build, that in spite of its slightness conveyed an impression of agility and physical power, the latter showing in an unusual degree in the boy. Both had the same black eyes with the quizzical humour uppermost ; the same square jaw and the swarthy skin and black hair of the Western Celt, though one head was tinged with white. John Gallagher patted the girl's head as he passed.

" Well, Dymphna ! What's he at this time, Hibernians or Orangemen ? " he queried with a smile, having caught his son's last heated remark.

" Both," responded Dymphna promptly. " Uncle John says it's bad policy to talk politics to customers. You should let them do the talkin' and agree with everything they say, no matter what they are," said she pertly.

John Gallagher laughed heartily. " That's one for you, Seumas avic ! "

The boy's mouth curved scornfully. " Dymphna Donnelly, you're no good ! Not that it matters

much, as you're a girl ; you'll not be able to do much harm, if you do no good ; but it was out of your sort—judgin' by your talk—that they made spies and turncoats long ago," he said tersely. Turning on his heel he went outside and sat on the window sill whistling "Ninety-Eight."

"Don't heed the brat," said his father kindly, as tears of humiliation welled up in Dympna's eyes.

She had taken sides against Seumas Gallagher, not because she disagreed with him, for she was too young to think much of such matters, and paid little attention to what her elders said about them, but because of an incentive to outward antagonism that was born of a secret admiration for, and desire to attract a boy some years older than herself. And this was not the first, but the hundredth time she had been vanquished—had failed miserably.

"I came for the 'Evening Echo,' she remarked with a bitter glance through the window at the back of a curly head.

"It ought to be here soon ; the train is due and Jackson has gone to the station. Will you wait for it, or shall I send Seumas up with it ? The excursion train may come in first and delay the other."

That decided Dympna. She would be able to see all that was to be seen of the returning holiday

makers here. There was not nearly such a good view from her own house, and besides, her mother would insist on her staying indoors on such an occasion.

"When I've waited so long, I may as well finish my wait," she answered cheerfully, carefully avoiding the window and turning her attention to a glass case full of books and rosary beads. She was silent for a few minutes. Then suddenly she seemed to remember something, and with a visible satisfaction she announced :

"I'm going to a boarding school in September, Mr. Gallagher."

## CHAPTER II

JOHN GALLAGHER looked up from the paper through which he was glancing.

"I'm right glad to hear it, Dympna," he said cordially. "A boarding school is the place for a girl, but for a boy—it sometimes does more harm than good." This meditatively.

"Mother often wonders why you never sent Seumas to college?" she said interrogatively and looked towards the window, but the black head had disappeared and as she spoke Seumas entered the shop.

"I want Seumas to grow up a good Irishman. Had I sent him to college, he would probably have had a hankering after a profession like the rest of the boys of his standing who are neglecting the land and business that made their education possible, for poorly paid, over-crowded, genteel professions. It's hard to tell," he continued, as if speaking to himself, "whether it is the fault of the parents or the teachers, but there is no doubt that an amount of the college life of the present day is demoralising the future men of Ireland. I should say rather, demoralising their nationalism.

Seumas is going to stay on with the Brothers. He will secure there as good an education as any of the colleges can give. The men who are doing most for Ireland to-day, the type of men we want multiplied by thousands, are the old boys from the Brothers' schools. They have been educated in the environment into which they were born, and they have none of the unwholesome cravings for social advancement, quite distinct from ambition, that college life seems invariably to instil in the son of the small farmer or business man. We want the Brothers' men in thousands because they are introducing education and nationality into the minor commerical and labouring life of the country, and are keeping it there— influencing the ignorant to live up to them, to want education, not taking it away to another sphere—a sphere that is in no way vital to the progress of the country. No, Seumas is not going to risk forgetting what his father has taught him—that it is industries and commerce, not medicine and law, that make a nation. And you, little girl, don't forget that when you have finished school and are about to choose a career. Don't ever be ashamed of the counter, child, for it has stood well by you. Of late education is playing queer freaks with people, instead of making them big and broad and noble. Can I preach as well as Seumas ? " he broke off with a laugh at himself for having been betrayed

into speaking thus to a mere child, but whose interested expression showed her to be following every word. It was not her interest, however, but something in his son's eyes, that had in reality led John Gallagher to digress to this small audience. It was an appeal, an explanation that needed renewal as often as the occasion would hold it gracefully, for when youth makes a sacrifice it lessens the pain if the end in view is seldom out of sight. Though Seumas had been given his choice and had made his sacrifice willingly.

For the moment Dympna had forgotten herself. She was thinking, really thinking, perhaps for the first time in her young life. Nothing could be more flattering than this suggestion of her responsibility made by John Gallagher, who was not only a grown-up man, but one of the most respected men in Clonell. It aroused in her a desire to make good, to do things, she knew not what things, but to *do* at all costs.

The man behind the counter regarded her with an amused expression in his dark eyes, and repeated his question, which she did not seem to have heard.

"Far—far better," she responded enthusiastically. Then pertly: "But he'll be goin' over all that again to me, or may be somebody else another day."

"Will I, indeed?" put in the boy indignantly,

There was a queer hurt look in his eyes and Dympna wondered if her words had vexed him ; but something told her it was not so. Then of a sudden she guessed. It was what his father had said about college. He had once told her in a burst of confidence how he longed to go to college ; longed for school life and the hundreds of boy companions he would find there. That was it. He had not been allowed to go and now he was jealous of her good fortune. With an inward crow of delight she realised that soon she would be able to pay him back for what she considered his present superiority. She would return with a fine accent and all sorts of accomplishments and lord it over him to her heart's content. Of course, sometimes she would be nice to him, but he would have to be snubbed into the position of suppliant for her smiles.

A lad carrying a bundle of newspapers interrupted her castle building. He rushed past her and deposited them on the counter in breathless haste.

"The excursion train's in, and some o' them's in the quare way," he exploded. "When they were a bit on the other side o' Portadown, man ! but the Orangemen fired stones and bottles at the train and broke about twenty windies. Mrs. Mulcahy and Lizzie Bennett, and a whole lot more, are all cut about the heads and faces and—I'll be

. back in a minit when I see——" and dusty bare feet and ragged flying coat-tails were all that was visible of Tommy Jackson as he sped again towards the railway station where the discordant noises of a fife and drum band endeavouring to make a start were desecrating the evening air.

Then another sound was borne into the shop ; a quick, dull, monotonous strumming, which in contrast to the melancholy discord of the band sounded weird and unearthly.

" Well, I'll be hanged if that isn't the drums," ejaculated John Gallagher, still pondering over Jackson's exciting news.

Seumas and Dympna ran out into the street, peering down the long stretch to the right, whence the sound came. Out of the evening haze came two men bearing big drums, on which they were beating the dull strumming tattoo that had first attracted their attention. Each had a following of about half a dozen other men and boys and a train of children of every age and size. Opposite the dwellings of the few Catholic inhabitants of the street they came to a standstill, drumming fiercely with all the strength of their muscular arms, on their faces grins of almost fiendish enjoyment. As they proceeded, heads appeared at windows and doorways became congested with admiring and sympathetic spectators, and they

were hailed from every side, while often boys and men came forward to swell the following.

"It's the Ferguson crowd," said a man who stopped at the door to watch. "A damned bad crowd they are; they're out for trouble and they'll get it. What brought them out a day like this at all? Nobody interfered with *them* on the twelfth."

"Maybe it's only a bit of bluff; they'll hardly attempt to go up our end; they'll turn back when they see the excursion party coming," prophesied John Gallagher hopefully.

"Now I'm tellin' you they're out for trouble," declared the man. "Jimmy Ferguson's on the booze and when he's that way he's fit to rouse a whole town."

He was right in his surmise. The Hibernian band, leading the returning excursionists, was gaily approaching down the street opposite Gallagher's shop, as yet unaware of the opposition party timed to meet them as they turned the corner into High Street.

"Better close the shop, father; there's sure to be a row here," warned Seumas.

"You're right, lad; up with the shutters. Don't you think you had better make for home, Dympna? If there is a fight the town won't be cleared till midnight, and your mother will be anxious about you."

The girl was standing in the middle of the pavement, her eyes smouldering with excitement, all traces of awkwardness and self-consciousness vanished. She turned a pleading look on him, but he shook his head.

"No, you must go, child," he said firmly. "Seumas, run in and get Dympna a paper."

Seumas thumped the last shutter into place and went indoors for the paper.

"Girls are only in the way when there's a fight on," he remarked, grinning as he thrust it into her hand. "Besides, you would not know which side you liked best, the Hibernians or the Orangemen."

She glared at him. "You—you old Fenian, you," she spluttered angrily and backed slowly and reluctantly up the middle of the street. But she had not the slightest intention of going home till she had seen all there was to be seen.

Round the corner came the Hibernian band, gorgeous in green and gold sashes trimmed with rosettes of many makes and shapes, and soft green slouch hats surmounted with waving white ostrich plumes in various stages of bedragglement. In front, two top-heavy gentlemen staggered under the weight of a banner, before which a person, who might have been imposing on his departure that morning—and who was making frantic and ludicrous efforts to look that same now—carried

the usual tall crozier-like staff. In the wake of the band came the four hundred excursionists, men and women, boys and girls.

Along came the Orange drummers, drumming as if their lives depended on the amount of noise they made. They made a dash to get in front of the band, but the man with the staff sprang unsteadily forward and holding it across the road barred their progress.

The drummers stopped beating and stared at the besashed one and then at the crowd behind him, as if they had no idea till that moment that such things existed. Then in a dangerously calm, rather thick voice the foremost of them spoke.

“Would you mind movin’ one side, if you please ? These roads is public as far as I know.”

“The road is public after the excursion passes, not before,” replied the obstructor.

“They have no right to be out the day anyway,” came a voice from the Hibernian following. “No-body interfered with *them* o’ Tuesday, and Be Heavens, if they come up our way now, they’ll not want to come back in a hurry—them and their ould tin cans.”

A general laugh greeted this harangue, but nevertheless the crowd was growing restive at the delay.

“We’ve as good a right to the street as you, better indeed, and up it we’re goin’,” retorted

some one from the Orange following, which was swelling gradually and pressing around to listen.

" Devil the foot, till ye get lave ; stand back now," and a big fellow sprang forward and seizing the staff from the first offender waved it threateningly before the Orange drummers. There was a sudden stampede backward and two policemen who had been on duty with the excursion party appeared forcing their way towards the scene of disorder, and shouting to the bandsmen to move on.

Dympna Donnelly, out of range of the view of the spectators at Gallagher's door, had followed the proceedings breathlessly. She now pressed forward to wait the arrival of the police and the crisis, for no one liked to see an arrest or two better than she. Holding on to the tail of Dympna's cotton frock a mite of a girl with bare brown feet, a shock of curly black hair and big dancing grey eyes, had succeeded in making her way through also. A row had no horrors for her. During her seven years on earth it was the atmosphere she had breathed, importation from the Falls' Road, Belfast, as she was. She now gazed impudently into the faces of the enraged Orangemen, her grey eyes full of devilment, her small thin body all alert, poised ready to decamp in a flash if necessary, and chanted saucily :

" Up the long ladder and down the short rope,  
To Hell with King William and God bless the Pope."

The rage and resentment on both sides had reached the topmost pitch. It awaited only a straw on either side to give the balance the right or wrong tilt, and the straw had been flung on the latter side. The drummer made a lunge at the sprite with the drumstick. She ducked, dodged between a pair of legs, and with terrific force the blow descended on Dympna Donnelly's head. She had seen it coming and screamed, then fell heavily to the ground. On the instant a wholesale hand-to-hand encounter ensued. The women and girls belonging to the excursion party fled back towards the station and from out the houses in High Street dashed supporters of the Orange side. Backwards and forwards swayed the combatants in awful mêlée, and in the middle of it all lay a young girl's unconscious form, the pink cotton frock and pinafore torn to shreds, the brown-red hair matted with dust and blood.

John Gallagher and Seumas standing in the half-closed door ready to shut it at any moment for fear of the fray overflowing into the shop and wrecking all therein, had been horrified spectators of the scene ; and what ensued was enacted so rapidly as to leave no time for action on their part. They had completely forgotten about Dympna until she emerged in the clearing between the two parties. Recovering, they both darted forward, but John laid a detaining hand on his son's shoulder.

"Keep away, boy. You can do no good," he commanded sternly, and began to shoulder his way towards where he thought the girl had fallen. But he might as well have been dashing himself against a wall of rubber or elastic, for as soon as he made any headway the crowd recoiled from the batons of the police, who had appeared on the scene, and he was carried back with it. Only for a second Seumas watched him hesitatingly, then stooping down and thrusting his head forward, he edged his way in between the swaying mass of legs. In and out, in and out he went, finding legs more difficult to push about than he had anticipated, his back and neck aching from the strain, he shuffled along almost bent in two. His head was swimming when he came upon her. A couple of men were standing beside her, keeping the crowd from trampling on her, though it was taking all their strength to do it. They shouted, but in the frenzied fight no one heeded them. As the boy stood upright he could see a small body of mounted policemen tearing along towards them. In an instant he grasped the danger. They would charge, and in the panic and backward rush there would be no saving her. She would be trampled to death. He stooped down and lifted her by the shoulders with despairing strength. A wild unearthly shriek pierced high over the low roar of the mob. It was followed by another and another,

and there was a pause in the fight around them. Then shrilly, frantically :

" You've killed a girl. You've killed a girl."

The cry was borne across the throng stilled for the moment in its surging, and a horror-stricken silence prevailed. Those near seeing the still white face propped up against the boy's shoulder, gathered around. The two men who had been with her when Seumas arrived, lifted her and the crowd parted.

Seumas looked back as he followed. There had been no need to charge ; the police were walking their horses through a rapidly thinning crowd.

When they were inside the shop and the door closed, something in the boy's brain seemed to break. A horrible nausea overcame him and he staggered against the wall, groping blindly for support, and finding none he sank into a sitting posture on the cold stone floor. The touch of it on his bare hands revived him. He felt ashamed and hoped nobody had noticed him. He need not have feared ; they were too intent on the still figure stretched on the counter. He struggled to his feet again, and sat down on a packing-case in the corner, out of the glare of the gas, which some one had lighted, for it was growing dark.

It is seldom given to a boy of seventeen to *feel* old, even though he may *be* old in life's cares, but at that moment Seumas Gallagher was telling

himself he was old—from that night onward though he would remain a boy, with all a boy's love of boy's things, there would be a part of him that centuries of living could scarcely make older. In the space of one minute of time he had lived an eternity of terror. Because of his impressionable youth, no other crisis in his life could ever be so big. Of all this he was dimly aware ; only dimly comprehensible ; yet nevertheless he grasped it.

A loud knock came to the door. Some one opened it and Dympna's mother appeared, followed by a doctor and the Head Constable. She walked straight to the counter, her eyes burning feverishly ; her face deathly white. She made a choking sound as she reached the figure, then remained very still, making no movement to touch her.

John Gallagher had been endeavouring to pour brandy between the clenched teeth, and one of the men who had brought her in was gently flicking the dust from her face and hair with a doubtful-looking red handkerchief that smelt strongly of tobacco. The doctor examined her quickly, and like a statue the mother awaited his verdict. At last it came.

"She is only badly stunned," he said with evident relief, bathing the wound in her head. "She will be all right in a few days when she recovers from the shock. The padded top of the drum-

stick saved her life ; had it been a hard object it would have killed her."

The mother gave one long shuddering sigh, but no words came. Her face was even whiter, but the awful feverish look had gone. The doctor now administered the brandy, John Gallagher bathing the injured head, and after a time Dympna opened her eyes, only to close them again after a vague glance around her. Another minute and again she opened them ; this time to keep them open. Long and hazily she looked from one to the other of the people about her till her eyes fell on the Head Constable and a ray of intelligence illumined them. John Gallagher moved to shade her from the glare of the gas, and watching him she frowned painfully, as if collecting her thoughts ; then asked weakly :

" Seumas, where's Seumas ? "

They had forgotten the boy till now, and as he came forward, still somewhat dazed, the man with the red handkerchief turned and spitting in his hand held it out.

" Lave it there, Seumas Gallagher. You're the finest man in the North of Ireland this night. Man ! but you're the quare smart boy entirely," and turning to the astonished group he gave a graphic description of what had occurred. Seumas was quite bewildered ; he could barely recollect what he had really done, nor could he account for the

impulse that had prompted his action. It was beyond the countryman who had witnessed it to grasp the workings of a brain that had seen the danger and averted it in a flash of wit, especially as the exponent was but a child.

They all wrung his hand in turn and patted him on the back, but as yet he felt no thrill of pride ; he was hardly conscious. Mrs. Donnelly took his hand, and for the first time he felt glad for the thing he had done.

As they had forgotten him, so too he had forgotten the cause of the commotion, until she now repeated weakly :

“ Seumas.”

He bent over her and smiled shyly, remembering their encounter of an hour before.

“ Are you better, Dympna ? ” he enquired awkwardly.

She did not heed the question. She raised a weak but vehement voice. “ Seumas, I hate the Hibernians and I hate the Orangemen. I’m—I’m a Fenian,” she declared solemnly, to the astonishment of all present.

### CHAPTER III

A LONG, hearty laugh, and a spring that caused the wires of the bed to squeak jerkily for quite five minutes. In sheer delicious enjoyment Dympna Donnelly twirled the "Ulster Tatler" a couple of times and sent it spinning to the far corner of the room, and subsiding into the pillows again broke into hilarious merriment over the report of the meeting of the County Council which she had been reading. It was such a pleasing laugh, full and unrestrained, and as its owner turned her attention to the breakfast-tray on the little table beside the bed, she gurgled to herself with amusement, "My dear child, you must not laugh so loudly ; it is not lady-like ! "

It is a difficult matter, the eating of bacon and egg, with one's elbow propping one in a position that is neither sitting up nor lying down, and Dympna's breakfast turned out to be a lengthy affair. As she munched industriously her eyes strayed to the discarded paper ; they became suddenly thoughtful and serious, and a somewhat perplexed expression spread over her face.

The people of Clonell who had known her as a child and watched her grow to girlhood in the holiday intervals of her four years' absence at school, declared that she was the same Dympna —anyone who had seen her thrice then would recognise her now. This statement, if a trifle on the side of exaggeration, had a good many points in its favour. The added compliment, that of course she had grown better looking, might also be challenged. And yet a keen observer might explain it, but it would need to be an exceptionally keen one.

The tip-tilted nose and too large mouth above the chin that was a tiny bit too square ; the clear firm skin with the red blood showing through ; the rather narrow, slanting brow, that spoke of brain power and enterprise, and the tossed reddish curls, were those of the Dympna of old, and a picture wondrous good they made framed by the white frilled pillows and the blue of the eiderdown. It was the eyes which had changed ; the Irish eyes of greyish blue, not light greyish blue, but the muddy blue of slate. At first glance one would call them thoughtful eyes, but underneath the surface there was a restless element that gave an impression of turbulence only lightly curbed, liable to spring up and overflow at any moment. Because of that indefinable something underneath, there was a wonderful fascination about them that

had been lacking in childhood, before that something that was to influence so strongly her young life had been awakened. And that was the explanation of the fascination, that those who in looking and looking, unconsciously striving to interpret it, confounded with the beauty that is but of the surface.

If there was fascination and individuality about the girl, it was repeated in her surroundings, though for these another was responsible. With its cream walls, topped by a frieze of nodding yellow daisies ; its white enamelled furniture and dainty white bed ; its carpet, like the eiderdown of deepest blue, though it was only blue felt ; the little white hanging book-case filled with volumes, among which were " Mitchell's Jail Journal " and the " Life of Michael Davitt," odd reading for a girl not yet nineteen ; its vases of yellow daisies, tall and slim on the mantelpiece and nodding dignifiedly coquettish at themselves in the dressing-table mirror ; its two pictures, both religious, one over the bed a delicate sepia sketch of the Thorn-Crowned Head, the other a coloured print of the Madonna ; and within reach of the bed a minute china angel holding a font for Holy Water ; it was not a room one would have expected to find over one of the fry of smaller shops in an Irish provincial town, or any other town for that matter.

But Dymphna Donnelly's mother was one of those women, well read, cultured, not only gentle-woman outwardly, but in every thought, who are to be found among her class by no means rarely in Ireland. She had been an assistant mistress with eighteen pounds a year in the Clonell National School before marrying Patrick Donnelly. With his brother John, her husband had owned the place in which she now lived, and he had been the favourite of the two, easy going, good-natured and physically attractive. Without saying so much he had considered himself a decidedly good match for pretty Nora Kelly—for though he did see plainly that intellectually she was his superior, he was of the type who would dismiss with a laugh any suggestion of equality of the sexes, and would have thought the situation balanced, aye overbalanced by his prosperity.

Then after five years of married life he died, leaving to his wife his share in the business. After his death things went on as before, John doing the heavy work while his sister-in-law looked after the drapery. There had been worries over the business when bigger shops were opened up, and the coming of the mill and Mr. Gibson its owner had stirred into glowing heat the religious bigotry that smoulders in every corner of the North of Ireland, where Methodism and Presbyterianism have been planted, and she lost her small coterie

of non-Catholic customers who supported her because they liked her for herself.

Dympna, too, had been a worry. Never out of mischief, she had all the "touchy" characters in the town coming with tales of her daughter's "bouldness," though she soon found out that it was a case of "give a dog a bad name and hang him," as the child was blamed for every misdeed of which the culprit was not forthcoming. Then followed the phase which had its culmination in the boarding school, when Dympna became the centre of attraction for the young sons of local postmen, railway porters, carpenters and others whom Mrs. Donnelly did not deem suitable companions for the daughter of a shopkeeper.

The climax arrived the day her Uncle John had discovered Dympna seated on an upturned porter barrel in the backyard of a public-house a few doors off, an excited spectator of a contest, carried out in complete defiance of all sporting regulations, between one boy of sixteen who bottled stout and another of like age who was boarded out from the workhouse. The bad feeling between the combatants had arisen out of a discussion as to whose girl Dympna was. Tommy, red of cheek, and with the devil of an eye for catching the fair sex, had told unblushingly of the kiss he had managed to snatch the previous evening. (Though it did only happen to alight on the back of the recipient's

ear.) Then Skinny Frank, the boarded-out lad, boasted of the evening of the circus, when he had sat through the performance with his arm around her (it was in the back row of the "thruppenny" place under shade of the red curtain that divided it from the more exclusive sixpenny seats, so nobody had seen), and afterwards walked home with her. How horribly he wished he had had the courage to manage a kiss like the bold Tommy. However, these details had been quite enough to arouse that swain's jealousy, and much to Dympna's delight the words ended in blows. All that was wanting to perfect the situation was a group of spectators to witness her triumph, preferably juniors, for her elders were wont to jeer at her conquests. Unfortunately for all concerned Uncle John was the only spectator.

She was, however, inclined to make the most of the advantages of a boarding school by climbing on to a high horse, and hereafter Mrs. Donnelly was spared any worry in that quarter.

When Dympna had been at school a year John Donnelly died suddenly, and the shop was Mrs. Donnelly's for good. Otherwise the mother's life had been absolutely uneventful, and the growing up of Dympna its first romance. For like the bulk of her class, aye and a good many other classes as well, she had given her heart for a home, rather

than for another heart. If she had missed something she did not know it, and at any rate Patrick Donnelly lost nothing, for he too was of the majority who look to marriage to provide them with a pleasant housekeeper rather than a kindred soul. True, she had known the kisses, the handholdings, the queer thrills that accompany the flirtations from which few pretty girls escape, but she had known that they and marriage were far apart, so they never troubled her peace of mind. Still, being a well-informed woman, she knew that such a thing as love existed for people who were, and could afford to be, inclined that way.

For the girl in bed she had no such ambitions. For her she wanted a good position, a good home, and incidentally a good husband, who would give her these items. To this end she would dress her well and give her as good a time as her means would allow, for only thus would she find the proper man. She forgot in her planning that Dympna might have her own ambitions and dreams, and that of old she had been wilful and headstrong to a degree, though these traits had not been fostered by spoiling.

There were, however, no signs of anything so unpleasant as an unruly will in the face that lightened with sweet expectancy as its owner sent a long, musical coo-hee ringing through the house,

and the banging of a door below was followed by light footsteps on the stairs.

"Well?" queried Mrs. Donnelly, as she entered and seated herself on the bed. As she had already given Dympna her morning kiss, even though it was the girl's first morning at home, it never occurred to her to repeat it. One wonders, when reading of the impulsive affection of the Irish, to what this widespread delusion is due, for they are seemingly cold—intensely cold—when it comes to showing or expressing affection for friends or relatives. Irish children and parents are shy, even ashamed to show their feelings for each other, while the frequent "darling" among acquaintances, as used in England, is never heard and much despised.

But Dympna needed no outward manifestations to know that her home-coming for good was an unspeakable joy to her mother. She answered her "well" with a satisfied downward nestle among the pillows.

"Oh, I just want you to stay and talk," she coaxed.

"My dear girl, I have something else to do," she smiled with a hint of mischief in her eyes that likened her to the Dympna of long ago. "I have been busy in the shop all morning. Before I was up Dan the Jigger was pounding at the door. His mother died last night, God rest her soul,

and he wanted sheets and curtains for the wake, and tea and sugar enough to do a month of Sundays."

Mrs. Donnelly made no move to go, and Dympna, her lips curving slightly, twisted herself into a still more comfortable position.

" May I go to the wake, mother ? "

" Of course not ; what would bring you ? "

" My pedal extremities," she grinned. " But are you not going ? "

" I ought to really, as they are good customers ; but it is so far ! "

" I like a wake," mused Dympna. " The dead person and the little altar with the candles and all the women in their 'good' clothes sitting round sipping wine—ginger wine, I got once. It was very long ago ; the time Biddy Finnegan died ; I was kneeling beside the bed saying a prayer for her, when a most overwhelming desire to feel if she were hard or soft overcame me, so I poked her hand and arm. Ugh ! I still feel the touch of the white cotton glove and the brown habit. They put me out in a most ignominious manner," she chuckled reminiscently.

Her mother laughed. " I think everybody in the town was glad to see you off to school ; you were an unmitigated little nuisance."

" When I was at home last Christmas, Mrs. Murphy said I was 'quare and changed ; in fact

the changedest girl she had ever known. I had become so quiet and study goin'.' ”

“ It’s not natural for a young girl to be too serious. You are not thinking of going back to the convent ? You don’t want to be a nun, Dymphna ? ” The tones were even enough, but the look that accompanied it was nervous and startled.

“ Good gracious, no ! Me a nun ! Wouldn’t Sister Columba have a fit if she heard that ? ” She felt rather than heard the long sigh of relief that greeted her light reply. Then, more seriously, “ Two of my class-mates are entering on the fifteenth of August. Tessie is one of them—you’ve heard me speak of Tessie ? She gave the nuns and teachers an awful time ; we’d have been dead without her. I used to tell her she would be a terrible flirt—the innocent look of her and the way she tossed back her hair when she was up to tricks. What a shame it will be to cut off her lovely hair ! ” and the sentence ended in a note of tragedy.

Then, hesitatingly, yet with assumed carelessness, “ How are the Gallaghers ? You know Mrs. Duncan called to see me just before I came home.”

“ They are quite well. Yes, John said he would ask her to call. Did you like her ? ”

“ Yes, awfully. I am going to see her soon—

when my bicycle is overhauled. And Seumas ? I suppose he is grown up."

" Yes, Seumas is a man." Mrs. Donnelly was watching Dympna closely, and she saw that there was a good deal of interest behind this casual interrogation.

" I expect I shall find him changed. It is two years since I saw him last. When I was at home in the summer he was at the Irish College in Donegal and at Christmas he was with his aunt. She is just dying about him, I could see."

" He is a fine boy. It is a pity John did not send him to college and put him on for something. He would have done brilliantly at anything he would have taken up. He won every prize and medal before him at the Christian Brothers, and when he topped the list in Senior Grade and automatically won the County Council Scholarship for the University he did not go in for it. People blame John for keeping him back, but it seems to me if the boy had any ambition in him he could have come round his father, who thinks there is nobody like him in the world. There must not be much in him if he is content to sell papers in a wee bit of a shop, when he might head any profession ; though, to do him justice, they say he has been experimenting with sand and that sort of thing with a view to starting a glass industry, though if he does succeed in setting anything going, which is

unlikely, no money will come out of it in his day, I'd say."

"It is industries and commerce, not professions that make a nation," the girl said dreamily. Noting her mother's bewildered expression she explained, "That is Mr. Gallagher's creed, and probably Seumas thinks likewise. I know *I* do, otherwise I should be going to the University like the majority of my class-mates. I also could have had a scholarship. Before I went to school," she said slowly, "it was the fifteenth, the day of the Hibernian excursion, when I was nearly killed and —Seumas Gallagher saved me—Mr. Gallagher told me all about it, and last year one day I happened to mention it to Sister Columba during the Irish class, and she said what a splendid man he must be; she wished he had ten sons instead of one, that they might do all the more good for Ireland. Oh, yes," she continued enthusiastically, "we talked a lot about it at times, and I used to grow disheartened because none of the girls felt as keenly about it as I did; but Sister Columba made me see that it is the individuals, not the mass, who build up countries and do great things for civilisation—those who have the spunk to work alone, to fight alone. If that is the reason why Seumas Gallagher did not adopt a profession, I admire him for it."

"You will find, however, that a profession is a

desirable commodity, especially in a town like this," her mother remarked drily, but not unkindly, in reply to this outburst. She was reassuring herself that this patriotism, inspired evidently by Sister Columba, was but a passing phase that must take its course without, however, being fostered. What could the nun know of the little inner life of Clonell and other places of its kind ? By degrees Dympna would see for herself the things that count most in such life, but not by experience if her mother could help it.

" In what way desirable ? " queried the girl.

" Well—er—it seems so silly to talk about it, but the fact of the matter is, unless you are in with the professional crowd you are nobody. You'll see what I mean for yourself before you are here a month. They are most exclusive people." There was a hint of ironical amusement in the tones, but only a hint. " They have their golf and tennis clubs, and their little bridge parties and dances and—oh, quite a gay time in their own small way, but business people are without the pale ; except, of course, big business people like the Johnsons, who live outside the town and have a motor-car. If you are monied it does not matter, you're eligible ; but I'm alluding to people—like ourselves."

" I see," murmured Dympna absently ; but she did not see, and her mother knew it. " But

it seems to me one does not miss much in being below the standard of people with minds so small and narrow, that they choose their friends not for themselves but for what they are."

"They may be all that, but they are the only people with whom you might care to make friends. Most of the girls you used to know are away teaching and nursing, and those who are left have not had the educational advantages you have had. However much you like them, that is bound to make a difference. The others, if they are not what you would call intellectual, are polished and amusing—with their own, the polish is not over deep—and you would find they had more tastes in common with you."

Doubtfully, "They don't sound interesting, to say the least of it. Isn't there anybody you could call intellectual in Clonell, since you happen to use the word?"

"Oh, yes, the Gallaghers and their set—all too engrossed in politics or rather nationalism and that sort of thing for a girl of your age."

"Yet where would you find more interesting people? How did you forget them, mother, even for a moment? Don't worry; while I have them I shan't want for company."

"Yes, but if you meet any of the others, be nice to them. You may as well have a good time

if possible, and I think some of the women may take you up."

"Oh dear ! I'm much too ambitious to want them—though I *should* like a dance. If it would give you pleasure to know them, mother, I'll make them have me whether or no," she said firmly.

"No, they might not mind asking you around, but remember I am still behind the counter."

"Counter be dam—darned—patched, I mean," and Dympna exploded with laughter, at her mother's shocked expression. "How would that go down with this exclusive set ? It might be vulgar, and again it is more likely that it would be modern, bless their little hearts. Well, mum, if you're not good enough for them, they're not good enough for me. Anyway, we'll see."

After which epigrammatic wind-up Mrs. Donnelly stood up. "Get up, dear. I must really go now."

"Mother, my room is awfully pretty. I'm sure there isn't a prettier one anywhere. You are an artist, mother, and do you know I take after you," she laughed merrily. Then pensively, "Sister Columba always said modesty was my great failing."

Her mother joined in the laugh. "Get up, you humbug ; you have to go the rounds to see all your old friends and enemies. I am glad you

like your room. You must have some new clothes too."

"I say, that's great! Mother, you are a brick."

To her astonishment Mrs. Donnelly stooped and kissed her with sudden passion, and the door closed on the neat little figure in the tweed skirt and natty shirt blouse.

## CHAPTER IV

DYMPNA stood gazing at herself in the mirror. She had put up her hair for the first time and she could not make up her mind as to whether she liked it or not. She had vague longings after an elaborate coiffure, but the manœuvres of the last half-hour refused to secure any such result. Finally, her arms aching from pulling the long heavy mane this way and that and her temper aching from disappointed hopes in the line of hair-dressing, she had taken the lot and brushing it back from her face, knotted it at the back of her head with more haste than care. The effect had been better than she had anticipated, and a judicious pull in front and the loosening of a curl here and there were the improvements she was still surveying as she stood, lithe and slim, in the simple black lustre school frock with its low square neck, brightened only by a heavy silver chain from which was suspended the big silver "Child of Mary" medal.

The restless look in her eyes had become more pronounced since the chat with her mother, but it disappeared as, after a peep into the other rooms

to see if there was anything new since the last holidays, she flew downstairs to the shop.

It was a type of shop to be found in every village in Ireland and in the less modern streets of the provincial towns. The door leading to the hall, out of which opened the living or sitting-room, was opposite the street door. On either side ran high, well-scrubbed counters. On the side devoted to groceries, along one part of the wall, shelves gave place to rows of minute drawers labelled rice, cloves, cinnamon, senna and various other household and medical commodities. Above was a long shelf of bottles—vinegar, castor-oil, cow and horse physics, and boxes of ointment, vaseline, hair-oil and pills. Dangling in gay array from the knobs of the drawers cards of salts and flower seeds gave a note of colour, as did also the brightly painted bins of flour and tea and meal.

The opposite side was given over to dry goods, and the shelves there were filled with materials of latest texture and hue to suit the servant girls who followed fashion assiduously; and sombre clothes strong enough to stand the violent tests to which farmers' wives and daughters would submit them, before exchanging for them good hard cash. Hats on stands graced the lower end of the counter, and on a line above in graceful array hung infants' woollen garments, and under-garments for men and women best unmentioned.

Behind this counter Mrs. Donnelly was standing in conversation with a big coarse-looking country woman dressed in hat and shawl, when Dympna entered.

"Glory be to God, and is that you, Dympna?" exclaimed the woman as the girl came forward to shake hands. "And when did you come home?"

"Only yesterday. How have you been all this time, Miss Moloy?"

"Now, to tell you the truth, Dympna, I haven't been the best; what with the doin's of them Ulster Volunteers up our way, sure the wits are scared out o' me at times, and me livin' all me lone in the middle of them. Bad cess to them!"

"Why, what have they done?" queried the girl with interest.

"Done! Lord love you, child, sure they're drillin' every evenin' in life in Proctor's field, up behind my house, and the curses of them, and to hellin' with the Pope every time they pass the dure would make the priest himself shake in his shoes. Says ould Proctor himself and him passin' last night, 'We'll not be long polishin' them off; them and their Home Rule; we'll not lave one o' their b—— kind in the country before we stop.' Oh! they're real bad boys, they are, with their drillin' and dummy guns; not but the same dummy guns aren't good for wollopin'. They fell

on young Tom Gannon o' Saturday night, and him comin' from the chapel, and they bate him till he wasn't able to stir, because the lad smiled when he saw them marchin' into the field to drill."

"There is talk of starting an army of Irish Volunteers for the defence of the country," said Mrs. Donnelly, by way of making conversation. Dympna displayed unusual interest in this remark.

"So I hear. They say John Gallagher has something to do with it ; he was up in Dublin at a meetin' about it, and Seumas is to start them here. But sure they'll not keep them up long. Ulster Volunteers and all didn't some o' them turn round and put in ould Gibson last election. That's always the way with the Catholics ; they won't stick together against them devils of Orangemen. Anyway the Clonell fellas will have the right man at their head ; Seumas Gallagher's the finest young chap you'd meet in a day's walk. Now there's the right boy for *you*, Dympna, schoolin' and all, for he got as much o' that same as yourself ; though it was in Clonell he got it and not at a grand boardin' school."

Dympna blushed furiously and was raging with herself for it.

"Are you gettin' long holidays ?" queried the talkative one after a rest.

"I'm home for good," responded Dympna cheerfully.

"Home for good!" ejaculated Miss Moloy in astonishment. "An' are you goin' to make no use of your schoolin'? Well now, I don't see what you wanted with it at all if you're goin' into the shop. Some people gets quare notions anyway. Divil the much schoolin' your father got. Now, Mrs. Donnelly, don't be keepin' me here all day. Show us a bodice there."

An amused glance passed between mother and daughter as the former pulled a stout woollen vest from the line above.

"Is that anything like what you want, Miss Moloy?"

"Naw! it's one o' them white ones with the lace."

"Oh!"

Mrs. Donnelly brought forth a box of muslin underwear and held up a dainty lace-trimmed affair.

"That's the very thing. It's just for Sundays I want it. Last Sunday Kate MacDermot got wake in the chapel and when they opened her blouse to throw water on her, she had one o' them nice bodices on her. When I went home, says I to myself, sure I might faint myself any Sunday and I'd like to be prepared, so I'll just go in to Mrs. Donnelly and get a bit o' style to wear over my ould red flannel. Now how much do you want for that?"

Mrs. Donnelly consulted the ticket attached.  
“One and tenpence.”

“Now, go out o’ that. Sure there’s not more than sixpence worth of stuff in it.”

“Oh, yes there is; and you must count the lace and the price of making.”

“I’m tellin’ you I could get better value in M—— for half the price. I’ll give you one and four for it.”

“I could not do it. You know well, Miss Moloy, that I never make two prices.”

“Then, one and six.”

“No, I cannot give it less than one and ten.”

“Augh! put it up there and I’ll give you one and eight.”

“Cannot.”

“Well, I’ll go elsewhere. Good mornin’ to you.”

“Good morning.”

Mrs. Donnelly was replacing the box when Miss Moloy returned. She had decided that bargaining was useless.

“As I’m in need of it I’ll take it, but it’s not worth the money. Give us a pennorth of elastic. Now don’t cut your finger,” she admonished as Mrs. Donnelly measured out the required amount. This to ensure a tiny bit over the yard being given in, it being considered niggardly to give the bare measure.

Mrs. Donnelly sighed wearily as her troublesome customer departed, and Dympna came out of her thoughts to scrutinise her mother closely ; the bright little mother who had slaved to educate her ; who had endured the insults and impudence, not often meant as such, it is true, that life behind the counter in such a town as Clonell brings in its train ; all the haggling and bickering with which the North of Ireland farmer and his family, who constituted the major part of her customers, accompanies the purchase of anything from a pennyworth of pins to a horse and cart.

Yes, there were streaks of white in her mother's hair, and little lines under her eyes. "Why were they there ?" the girl questioned herself rebelliously. And because her earliest recollections were of the cant of the North, the answer sprang up quick and sure in her brain. "Bigotry."

Her young blood seethed, and in its seething she forgot that there were three other provinces where all was peace and concord ; where this question of creed was one of mutual respect for individual opinions, and the world looked very black indeed. It was to bigotry she traced those white hairs, those tiny lines. They were the result of the struggle for a living against Orangemen, who, not content with seeing that none of their colour darkened her mother's door, endeavoured to net in numbers of Catholic customers for the

Orange shops. It was not the first time she had thought of it all. Of late she had dwelt much on the state of things that made possible the events of that fifteenth of August years ago, from which she had so narrowly escaped with her life. She told herself that the ignorant were to blame. In her bright enthusiasm for justice she could never quite understand the blindness of the mob. It seemed to her so apparent that someone ought to help them to see things as they were—without the ugly distortion that had hidden the truth for such long, long years. It was this question, principally, that had decided her to shun ambition, to live her life in the little provincial town, that in her own small capacity she might do some practical work for her unhappy country. She had adopted John Gallagher's creed in earnest and already she had mapped out her path.

"Penny for your thoughts, Dympna?" said her mother.

"I was thinking of the religious bigotry that is at the bottom of all this strife on the part of the Protestants against Home Rule."

"Yes? It seems to be in their bones. I was watching a child this morning—he could not have been more than four—who was standing at the window when Father Mullen passed on his way home from Mass. The kiddie gave him such a black look and then spat towards him. It seemed

so terrible that a child of that age should have such hatred ingrained in it."

" And yet it goes on, and nobody seems to start anything like a campaign to bring the two sides together. It's not much use appealing to the older people, trying to break old dogs of their trot, though with the Catholics there would be less difficulty, they've always been underdogs and they've the easy-going Celtic nature; but the others, with their Puritan and Scotch blood, the older they grow the bitterer. As they lived they'll die. We must start with the young people, the girls to begin with, because they will influence the homes." Dympna's face glowed with enthusiasm and in her eyes shone the purpose of youth's fresh ideals.

" We ? " queried her mother with raised eyebrows.

" Yes, we educated women."

Mrs. Donnelly looked lovingly on the woman whose chignon had come undone and hung in a long fluffy ringlet down her back, and smiled.

" You may smile, mother, but you shall see what I am capable of doing when I mean to succeed," she continued proudly. " I intend to start a Girls' Club, a cosy, comfortable place where they can drop in any time; where they can dance and sing and read and enjoy themselves and on certain days invite their men friends. And—it

will be open to all creeds. That will be its main object—to bring the girls of Clonell and the districts around, of every creed, together ; to make them know each other, so that all this old distrust and hatred, that has in reality absolutely no foundation, will melt in fellowship; to show them that after all we are all of the same flesh and blood, no matter what our descent. There is so little for them to do when work is over. Nobody organises any fun for them and they don't know how to do it themselves. They are starved for amusement, so there is plenty of room for bitterness. What better way to bring that to an end than by helping them to mix socially ? Eventually the Protestants would realise that we would never interfere with their religion if we had Home Rule—I mean this little batch. It might spread then. The men might start a club on the same lines, and so on. If we could only sow the seed."

" But—but," stammered Mrs. Donnelly in blank astonishment, " you must know a young girl like you, with neither standing nor money, would find such an undertaking wellnigh impossible, even if it were possible to proceed on non-sectarian lines, which I do not believe. The people would say you had an amount of cheek to attempt anything of the sort."

" I would get women of standing to help. I am sure Mrs. Lanigan, the new bank manager's

wife, and those Beaumont girls, would be top hole workers."

"I don't believe they would move a finger to bother about a suggestion coming from you. Besides, the Protestant crowd they go with would laugh at the whole thing. My dear," desperately, "they are altogether of the type who despise things Irish because they are not fashionable ; they keep out of anything that touches on Home Rule or politics for fear of losing caste ; and what you propose is purely a form of propaganda in favour of Home Rule. They would not touch it."

Silence. Then the mother spoke again.

"Supposing it *were* possible, where do you propose to find the money ? "

"Everybody would be asked to help to start it, give small donations and pieces of furniture. Bare rooms could be made so comfortable out of very little ; the girls would all help and it would give them an interest in the club. Every member would subscribe a few pence a month and they could give concerts and dances to keep it up. Why, they would just love it, and I would think and plan to make things go ahead and progressive."

Mrs. Donnelly spoke slowly as with effort. "Dympna, darling, I beg of you to put these ideas out of your head. They are not practical in the first place, and secondly, you would land yourself

into awkward and uncomfortable positions. Indeed, indeed, you would regret bringing yourself into public notice. People talk so in these little places and they would judge you not by your intentions, but by the interpretation put upon them by unkind people."

"But, mother, if one were to mind everything said by unkind people, one might as well not go on living at all. Why, if I could do Ireland an atom of service, I would do anything short of crime—anything. And," pathetically, "this would do such a lot of good."

"I tell you what, dear," said the mother with sudden inspiration, "go down and talk to John Gallagher about it. He will explain things as I cannot."

Dympna's face brightened. She had overlooked Mr. Gallagher. Here was one who would understand and help her. She realised that her mother did not yet grasp the all-surging love of her Dark Rosaleen that was so overpowering as to leave her spirit restless and impatient when not working with heart and soul to draw even a fraction closer the sides of the rift, that even as her young eyes watched grew wider, wider from hour to hour. How she had longed for, and dreamt of the day that would see her free from school to begin that work in the fair North East corner of hatred and enmity and strife. She was only a girl and she

knew she must be content with a girl's part, but that she would play with all her might.

There was no flinching in the eyes that looked back at her from the shop mirror as she twisted the tumbled hair into place, carelessly at first, but on second thoughts she removed the hairpins and adjusted it more effectively. After all the idealist was very much a girl.

Her mother watched her as she tripped down the street, and her customer's words came back to her, "Now there's the right boy for you, Dympna." There seemed little doubt about it. Dympna would be an apt pupil if Seumas Gallagher thought fit to tell her about the English misrule and minority rule that was the cause of all the trouble. Yes, she would probably love him for his progressiveness and democratic views. With a sigh she saw the girl disappear and she felt that with her slight figure disappeared her dreams and ambitions for her—dreams of that God of provincialists—position.

Already she knew instinctively that the girl would go her own way ; that she dared not control her, even if she could ; and her castles tumbled about her ears.

## CHAPTER V

As Dympna passed Gallagher's shop window she caught sight of the top of a dark head, and a rush of self-consciousness overcame her. She felt her school shoes clumsy and her black lustre dress out of place this hot summer day. And her hair —“ did it look as if it had been put up for the first time ? ” she wondered. But there was no drawing back now and she entered diffidently.

Seumas Gallagher was sitting at the desk by the window, bending over a large sheet of drawing paper. He had evidently arrived at a crucial point in his task, for he did not raise his head immediately, and the girl had time to assume the young ladyish rôle which ninety-nine girls out of a hundred would have assumed under the circumstances. What she saw in that first glance was profoundly satisfying ; the broad shoulders in the rough tweed coat were those of a man ; the strong clear-cut profile was brown as the face of the boy of long ago, but about the chin and cheek was an interesting bluishness that was new ; the hair that had been curly was smoothed into waves and brushed back from his forehead. Yes, Seumas

Gallagher was, as Kate Moloy had said, "as fine a young chap as you'd meet in a day's walk." All this Dympna noted before he flung down his pencil after a few final strokes and turned towards her.

"Dympna!" he exclaimed and jumped to his feet.

His unaffected pleasure at the sight of her disarmed her and as she held out her hand to meet his, she answered shyly, "Yes."

"A hundred thousand welcomes home," he said in Irish, his black eyes taking in also the change in her. "When did you come?"

"Yesterday. I stayed on during the holidays to study for matric, but changed my mind after a month of it."

"Why! aren't you going to the University, like the rest of them?" he asked, smiling.

"No," she replied thoughtfully. "The University is all right for girls who mean to teach and who will have to go on teaching on the same old narrow lines whether they like it or not, or for those who want the good time in town and a B.A. degree, and who can afford that. But it seems to me that you just miss all that's best and intense and life-filling in art and literature and everything else if you spend your best years gathering scraps of information for a prescribed programme, instead of taking those that really interest you

and absorbing them heart and soul, so that they influence and develop your character. I suppose my ideas are stupid ; that if I had to earn my living by my brain I'd be compelled to do as others do."

" And that is why you did not go ! " He was regarding her in some surprise. " It seems rather queer that I should have opinions which very nearly correspond with yours on higher education. I recently discovered that I have done more *real* reading, and know more about most things than if I had spent these last years at the University instead of at home. There would have been more opportunities and advantages in Dublin, of course, but I should not have taken them. In all probability I should have followed the crowd. To think of that being your reason for missing a good time in town," he said again as if he could not quite get away from it.

" Oh, there was another—a more important reason." With a flash of mischief. " It is industries and commerce, not professions, that make a nation. I am going to help in the shop and absolutely make people want Irish goods."

Seumas started, then laughed. " I say, you have a good memory."

" You remember the day your father said that to me ? "

" I don't think I shall ever forget it," he said

gravely. Then, as if he thought he had reminded her of an obligation, he added hurriedly and naively, " You see I was terribly hurt and jealous because you were going to school and the pater did not want me to go."

Dympna forgot her diffidence and chattered on as she followed Seumas Gallagher into the little room, half sitting-room, half office, opening out of the shop. She looked around her curiously as she talked and felt the refinement, the character of the place, though the feminine touch was wanting —for Seumas's mother died when he was a tiny child—and her woman's eyes saw dust where it ought not have been. But poorly furnished and shabby as the room was, there was no mistaking it for any but the abode of intellectual men. There were books and papers in abundance, real books, books that told of readers whose taste were above the ordinary, who were students of the best of progressive thought in many lands.

Yet there was nothing of the prig about the young fellow who partly owned them ; nothing in his bearing of easy camaraderie that suggested a mind that was certainly above the average. All this occurred vaguely to Dympna, and though the impression did not actually take the form of thought the appreciation was there. A thought that did come, however, was one that demanded to know whether Seumas's father, now that she

would be prone to criticise, might not prove to be somewhat didactic, from what she could remember of his attitude at times ; but all her fears on this score were lulled to rest as a moment later the object of them entered the shop, and in response to his son's "Father, here's Dympna," came in with a Gaelic welcome on his lips.

" Why, you're quite a young woman, Dympna. And your mother tells me you are home for good. I was speaking to her a few minutes ago as I passed ; and she puts the blame of it all on me," he said with evident amusement.

" All what ? " queried his son.

" That my lecturing one day long ago made such an impression on Dympna's youthful imagination that she declines to do anything but work for the nation's good." The amusement still in his eyes, he related what Mrs. Donnelly had told him of her conversation with her daughter that morning.

Poor Dympna blushed till she felt the blood surge under every root of hair. Her little plans sounded so small and insignificant in the presence of the two men, the one of them grown older and more careworn since she had last seen him, though people said John Gallagher ought not have a care in the world. She felt instinctively that he was not taking her seriously, and she was right. To a man, who for over half a century had been

continually striving for the freedom or Her who had demanded the lives of his father and grandfather and great grandfather before him, and who knew how hopelessly little had been the gain, though gain there had been, this young girl's cry to help seemed as the feeble cry of a babe who is exhausted from crying for something it cannot get and will soon cease to demand. He had never known a child, as she still was to him, to take so serious a view of life. On that score she interested him, and therefore instead of impressing upon her her youth and inexperience, he reasoned with her as he might have done with a man of another race who understood little of the country which he wished to help. Seumas, however, knowing too the splendid dreams of youth, saw and understood the gnawing desire to be doing which is the result of this great ideal patriotism that for æons Ireland has inspired indiscriminately in the hearts of the flowers and weeds of her flock. Nevertheless, he was as astounded as his father to find that such a seed had taken root in the heart of the commonplace child he had once known. She had now developed into an extremely fascinating girl, with ideas that were little short of extraordinary in one whose youthful environment had, by her own wilful ways, left much to be desired, and certainly held no influences that could lead to such development. While his father talked he pondered thus, and the

more he thought of this miracle of a Dympna, the more attractive she became in his eyes, apart altogether from the lovely restless physical fascination of her.

John Gallagher was speaking very kindly, very patiently, to the girl, who, elbows on the table, slim hands propping up her chin, now recovered from her confusion, watched him eagerly with her muddy, restless eyes.

"Yes, Dympna, your mother was right when she said it was not practical. Five years ago ; before 1911 ; such a scheme might have been attended with some success. Young people will overcome a good many prejudices for amusement's sake. But you do not yet realise the change that has taken place since Home Rule became a possibility of the near future. You are home one day ; when you have been at home a month you will understand. You have been in the convent, how many years ? "

"Five."

"Five, and everything has happened within that time. As I said, after years of political fighting Home Rule became a possibility of the near future and immediately the Unionists, or as you know them better, the Orangemen, declared they would have none of it, because, forsooth, their Catholic and Nationalist fellow-countrymen who never interfere with them in any way, but support them

materially wholesale, would oppress them and ban their religion. If it were not so serious it would be amusing," he said, as Dympna smiled at the idea, then put in :

" But that is just the fallacy I wish to try to dispel. Educated people do not credit such things, of course ; it is only the uneducated who believe it, and I know they really do believe it. It is only by practice and not by talking to them that we can ever draw both sides together. We must do something to bring them together—we who care."

" Ah, I wish I could endorse what you say—that it is only the ignorant you would have to contend with. Invariably it is the educated section which leads in these matters ; in this one they lead too."

The girl gave a little gasp of protest. The man continued thoughtfully.

" Whether they really believe that we would oppress them is open to argument. Some of them may, though it seems pretty incredible. At any rate the point is that it is they who foster this bigotry for their own ends. They are not always clever enough to keep the bare, blatant truth from us. That truth is, that now they rule Ulster and a good many other little concerns out of Ulster ; if we get Home Rule the Nationalists in Ulster, who are barely a few thousands less in numbers than the non-Catholic element, would have equal

rights. And they don't want that. Oh, not they."

"But it is only just," cried the girl. "They cannot refute justice in these days of growing democracy."

"The people who are at the head of it are *not* democrats, remember. They are autocrats of the worst type, the men who own our land and control the only industries that were not stamped out for the benefit of English capitalists—their industries. It is impossible, for instance, for a Catholic to enter the linen trade, where a clique of wealthy Orangemen would consider it a pleasant pastime—more, a real pleasure—to spend money in ruining him. These men started with the advantage of us. They were pampered and given our all when we were consigned to Hell or Connaught. The love of home was in our blood and we strayed back again to pick up the crumbs, but they've always taken pretty good care that if we insist on staying we shan't like our visit. They are not softening any. You, yourself, have known the impossibility of a Catholic working man securing a well-paid job. You have heard people comment when incompetents who are Protestants are given municipal and local government posts over the heads of better qualified, often brilliant Catholic applicants. In your own infirmary, last week, a Catholic nurse was dismissed for sending for a

priest at the request of a dying man, who had been born a Catholic, but had not been practising his religion, and who wanted to die one ; and his Catholic relatives were refused admittance to him when he was breathing his last. Such a case is not a very common occurrence, but it happens with variations *fairly* often all over the North. That is the treatment the Nationalist ratepayers receive in return for their money. These things could not happen in any free country.

“ I am telling you all this simply to show you that you would not be tackling the root of the matter by beginning with the working girls. They will always take their cue from the people who are responsible for the things of which I have spoken, the so-called educated class. I say so-called, because education leaves no blanks to be filled with intolerance and hatred for those who happen to profess different views. It never occurs to us to question their rights to worship where they will ; we respect their religion and know that it has produced many of Ireland’s best and greatest patriots.” Then somewhat wearily : “ Why are not they also for the development of the country ; for the making of it a grand free state like Australia, where every man would have his chance, be he Protestant or Catholic, Atheist or Mormon ? Their little rows and rowdyisms don’t count. It is this systematic shutting out of Nationalists

from everything, by the leaders of the ignorant, that keeps bigotry at a white heat. It is the leaders we are up against, not the boys and girls who are their followers. They don't want democratic rule because they don't need it. Through being autocrats they have become what they are, and they are not going to stop on their upward journey now if they can help it. They are backed up by the greatest autocrat in the world, the German Emperor. *He* can quite see why they prefer to shoot down those whose lands they occupy, at whose expense they every day grow richer, rather than grasp the hand of citizenship which they wish to extend."

"The queer thing is that the Government should let them laugh in its face and even hit back now when it is making this feeble Home Rule flutter," said Seumas. "It gives one to think a good deal."

Both men were watching Dympna curiously. She looked as if she were waking from a bad dream.

"I—see," she said at last. "I knew nothing—nothing. I did not understand—I was blind. I—I," she passed her fingers through the hair at her forehead and rumpled it feverishly, "I always thought we were as much to blame. I knew we middle-class Catholics were tolerant. I did not know much about the Protestants—I supposed

they were too. I blamed the mob, and," with a lost sort of expression, "I was all wrong. I don't know what to think," she concluded so childishly that John Gallagher began to regret his detailed explanations. He had meant only to show her the impossibility of carrying out her scheme just then, in the face not only of all lack of support from the Protestants of every class, but probably of organised opposition. Instead, he had thrown upon her young brain a tremendous burden of complicated thought, which it showed every intention of carrying.

She stood up, a little furrow down the middle of her brow, all the turbulence in her eyes stirred to the surface.

"Thank you so much for being so patient with me," she went on, for now she realised how futile her dreams had been, futile enough for instant dismissal and so she was truly grateful for the lengthy explanation. "Mother was right, indeed. I'm not practical," and there was a downcast look about her that made both men want to help her.

"But, Dympna," protested Seumas, "you can do something else; there are heaps of things for you to help along. For instance, we have a branch of the Gaelic League now and you could help with the Irish classes."

"I would have done that in any case," she answered. "You see I wanted to do something

special. Well, I'll go for a walk and think it over—there's such a lot of it too," she concluded with an effort to smile, and with a *slan leath* she was gone.

Seumas waited for his father to speak.

"A remarkable child, a very remarkable child," he uttered at length. "Her whole heart is wrapped up in the wish to do something for Ireland, her mother tells me. She thinks it is a phase that will pass. I don't know. It isn't so much her patriotism that strikes me as remarkable, that, thank God, is common enough, though it does not as a rule absorb altogether as it does her. It is her practical way of thinking of schemes that may be undoubtedly of use some day that is remarkable in the child. She has a fine head that girl, Seumas *avic.*"

Seumas started. He had been dreaming. Now he said enthusiastically, "She is so splendidly keen to work, why should she not get up an ambulance section in connection with the volunteer movement—that is, when we start?"

"That is a good idea. We must certainly have such a section."

"Well, Dympna is the very one to start; she is full of enthusiasm and will make things go in no time. Will you suggest it—or shall I? It would put heart into her if she were to know at once, even though nothing can be done for the

present. She was terribly disappointed over the club business."

" You tell her, of course, but remember nothing must be definitely settled yet."

Was it a gleam of laughter that lit John Gallagher's eyes as he returned to the shop. He heard Seumas bound up the stairs, three steps at a time, and floating down from a window above and in through the shop door came in a wonderfully soft musical tenor voice, Francis Davis' poem, sung to a tune that the voice altered to suit its own sweet will :

"Oh, my Black-North Girl—my Black-North Girl,  
I know nothing so fair as my Black-North Girl ;

• • •  
Oh, dearer to me than a palace of pearl  
Were a home in the heart of my Black-North Girl."

## CHAPTER VI

**SEUMAS GALLAGHER** unlocked the door of a cupboard in the corner of his bedroom, and extracting a leather case brought to light a pair of field-glasses.

There were two windows in the room, one looking out on the front, the other in the gable, for though the house was in the middle of the block that on one side was a story lower. Hence, standing at the gable window, Seumas was in a straight line of vision with the long, wide street that was a continuation of High Street and ran the whole length of the town. More than half-way along the street, on the opposite side, was Dympna Donnelly's home, almost invisible to the naked eye, merged as it was by distance into the houses on either side. But Seumas Gallagher's glasses were more than ordinarily powerful, and he pulled over a small table and seated himself upon it to watch.

Five minutes, and Dympna did not appear. Ten minutes. Fifteen minutes. Then came a shrill feminine voice from the lower regions.

“ Seumas, Seumas, come on to your dinner ; it's ready this half hour ! ”

He opened the door and called back, " Righto, Sarah ! I'll be there in a minute."

" Why, of course, Dympna was at dinner ; she would not be likely to go for a walk for the next half-hour at least," he cogitated, and descended in less haste than he had gone up, but resolving inwardly that the meal should occupy ten minutes and not a moment longer.

" Seumas, if I were you I would not leave those maps lying on the shop desk again. They might blow over the counter and out into the street. If you will insist on doing them at all, do be careful," admonished his father as he entered.

" Good gracious, what on earth was I thinking about ? Oh, yes, when Dympna came in I was so surprised to see her that I forgot to put them away."

" They don't matter now, boy ; but a time may come when they will, so better learn caution from the beginning."

Seumas nodded and finished the meal in silence, both knowing full well that caution against carelessness was hardly necessary ; that it had been but one of those little trials which heart is wont to give friend head occasionally, and, as usual, head was the one to go under.

Immediately dinner was over, Seumas was on guard again, and after half an hour's patient scanning of the house in question he was rewarded by

seeing the object of his interest, this time wearing a big, shady hat, and with a dog bounding on before her, take a turning to the right and disappear.

"Good training," he muttered with a satisfied smile, as he rubbed his neck where it had grown stiff from the backward tilt of his head. Putting away the glasses he left the room filled with the same pleasurable excitement that had come to him that morning when he had found his one-time playmate watching him with a shy uncertain look in her mud-coloured eyes, with their queer haunting expression.

Though his behaviour was decidedly a new rôle, strange to say he did not question himself about it. If he had thought of himself at all he would probably have considered himself ridiculous and enjoyed the joke, but he was thinking only of the girl. So it was not yet love, for love makes egotists of the most modest of human beings.

No, Seumas Gallagher was not in love, but he was exceedingly, tremendously interested. Unlike Dympna's youth, his own had been singularly free from school-time flirtations. He had always despised such things, and incidentally girls. Being, as he had been, the handsomest youth and now was the handsomest man in Clonell, he had not escaped flattering attentions from the fair sex; but unless proffered by a very clever exponent

such attentions are apt, almost invariably, to appear inane and stupid to a man of Seumas Gallagher's calibre. So women had never really occupied his thoughts till this August day, and even now it was not because of her sex the girl held him. In spite of the fascination of her, it was the character of her, but above all the great love of their Dark Rosaleen that filled her, that made her most desirable in his eyes. And when later he wheeled out his bicycle and set out for a spin in a certain direction it was the companion, the kindred spirit he sought, and not the girl. As he spun along he hummed again :

“Oh, my Black-North Girl—my Black-North Girl,  
I know nothing so fair as my Black-North Girl.”

It was good to him to know that she was a Black-North child, for the dream of his life, too, was the winning to the cause of the country of Owen Ruah.

When he overtook her she was standing on a bank on the roadside, gazing away over the hills to where a line of purplish blue streaked the pale blue of the sky. He felt somewhat bashful about making his presence known to her, but even as he sprang lightly from his machine she turned.

“Seumas!” she ejaculated. Then with a pleased smile, “Going for a spin?”

"Well, I'm not going anywhere in particular," he said truthfully enough. "Are you going on or returning?"

"I was just wondering how I could get up to the rath; the old path seems to be blocked up," she replied, pointing to a circular group of trees on the top of a low hill.

"If you wish to go up I will lead the way, that is if you don't mind scrambling through hedges and jumping ditches," he added, remembering that his friend was no longer the tomboy Dympna.

"Of course I don't mind," she replied promptly. "But what about your bicycle?"

"I shall leave it at Maguire's cottage as we pass."

In the joy of the first real cross-country scramble she had known for a long time Dympna forgot her serious mood of the morning. "I expect history will repeat itself and there will be half a dozen infuriated farmers in to-night to say that 'that devil of a Dympna Donnelly has been making holes in their hedges again,'" she remarked ruefully as Seumas hauled her through a hole that was never really meant to be a hole until Pat the dog started it and Seumas suggested that they might as well take advantage of it before making a virtuous and futile effort to close it up with a few rotten sticks.

He laughed merrily, replying gaily. "Oh dear,

no ; as you are now a young lady I would get the blame ; but we are really not doing any harm."

" Dear me, no," she laughed back, her eyes full of mischief raised to his dancing black ones.

Through another hedge that surrounded the base of the fort and they began to climb the steep outer bank. It was about fifteen feet in height and so precipitous that for every two steps they took upwards in the soft, mossy grass they slid back one. Still laughing they reached the top and paused to look about them. The bank on which they stood ran right around in a perfect ring and stretched six or seven feet in front of them before descending in a slope, this time inwards, to a huge trench, which went up in another precipitous bank. Inside that again there was yet another, and another, all surrounding a round dais in the centre. The tops of the ring-like banks and the dais were thickly wooded, and great beech and oak and elms hid the sun and heat of the outer world, closing the interior into shadowy dimness.

" How cool and shady it is," said the girl. " I remember coming here often before I went to school, though I was never comfortable in the place ; I expected fairies and leprechauns to pop out from behind every tree trunk. Aren't they wonderful, these old forts ? How altogether impenetrable these dense walls of earth must have

been. The trees are, of course, of fairly recent date."

"Yes, I shouldn't think the oldest is more than a hundred years of age. I expect the fort dates back to a couple of hundred years before Christ. I am not very well up in such matters, unfortunately. My father could tell you all about it. I wonder how it would stand out against modern guns," he continued thoughtfully.

"Let's go right round the rings and out again at the other side; the dimness oppresses me," said the girl, suddenly impatient. "I'm going to slide down this bank, sitting; if I tried to walk I'd probably end in that position anyway."

"Right! We can get out the other side and there's a glorious view from the top of the hill."

After making the circuit of each ring-like trench and scrambling up and down the dividing banks, they eventually reached the outer ring again and escaped into the sunshine, hot and breathless.

"How lovely! How perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Dympna, then lapsed into silence.

Down below them wound the road, a long white uneven ribbon, flanked by hedges of verdant green. On either side rose rich, fertile land, sloping gently; here a hill, there a valley, always hills, going higher and higher, with those dips and valleys between; hills divided by thick, wild hedges into quaint small squares and triangles and rectangles, and

here and there a circle ; some golden with ripening corn, some yellowish green, dotted with the starry blue flowers that told of flax ; some bright green and dotted with cocks of newly mown hay, whose perfume ladened the air ; some of the lovely dark greenish blue of turnip and mangle leaves. And stretching away to the highest peak still those squares and triangles with their borders of green hedges and trees, till they merged away into the sky. And along the whole horizon those purplish curves that started as pale sunny green, resting against the heavens.

It was the girl who spoke first. “ What mountains are those on the left ? ” she asked. “ I don’t believe I have ever noticed them before.”

“ The Mourne mountains. They are seldom so distinct ; you could easily have missed seeing them. The near ones are the mountainous districts of Monaghan and Tyrone. Can you see the spires ? The near one on this side—it is difficult to make it out, it is so like the background—is that of Monaghan Cathedral ; the more distinct, yet distant one is Dungannon Cathedral.”

“ How graceful they are ! They look like slender, misty silver ladders. Poets sing the praises of Wicklow and Kerry and Connemara, but is there in all the world anything lovelier than this ? When I go to Donegal in the summer the grand wildness of it overwhelms me, chokes all the feeling out of

me, but this—it just makes me want to die looking at it. You will think me silly and nonsensical, but when I see it all I feel oh, so glad to belong to Ulster. Seumas," with a little half hysterical laugh, "in days gone by Ulster did the big things—why, we who are left ought to be the flowers of the national flock."

The last part of the sentence was uttered in a tone of bantering raillery, as if to make light of this excursion into her dreamland, but there was no answering lightness in the dark eyes that glowed with enthusiasm as their owner replied in a voice that was strangely full of feeling.

"I understand—perfectly. There are others who feel all those things too. I'd give my life a thousand times over if I could see the alien element in Ulster joining hands with us, working for the general good; reviving our industries, our language, our literature, the whole life of the nation. Instead," bitterly, "in the country of Owen Ruah the last few years have raised the dividing wall to such a height that few of us can see even the sky that is over the other side. You and I will never see the day when one half of Ulster will forget that the other half, the more powerful half, prepared to shoot them down like dogs rather than see the country free with a freedom for which their best and greatest have fought. The deeds of the United Irishmen are nothing to their Pres-

byterian descendants, blinded as they are by cant and intolerance. Ah ! well, as my father says, they are not in a great measure to blame. It is men like the occupant of the castle behind us who have made them their dupes.

“Lord Clonell ! I suppose he is an anti-Home Ruler. But, of course, he would be. When I think of people like him with hundreds of acres of land that ought to be ours, and people like Maguires down there,” pointing to a cottage below them, “toiling morning, noon and night to feed and clothe themselves out of their two acres, it is bad enough ; but the idea of him standing up to oppose a rule for the betterment of these people who by every moral right are entitled to the possessions that bring in his thousands—it—it makes my blood boil. Why he and his kind are but mongrels—yes, mongrels,” she insisted calmly in answer to her companion’s smile. “They say they are not English, but neither are they Irish. Many of them have never been in the country twice in their lives. They live in their luxurious London houses and English country seats, and come here for the hunting. They know nothing about the lives of the people. How could they ? And yet they represent them, rule them, instead of men like you, who know—whose wants are their wants. Lord Clonell takes pretty good care that the roads are in good condition for his motor-cars, but he won’t

help Tom Maguire to get another acre of land to grow corn to make oaten meal for his children's porridge. Tom wanted to rent that field adjoining his, but the agent said his Lordship could not consider it. So I heard his wife saying in the shop last night. She's a splendid wee manager, is Mrs. Maguire. How she keeps those children so healthy and tidy on Tom's nine shillings a week is a mystery to me. She told me that Lady Clonell called to see her when she was over at Easter, and told her how much more hygienic would be a cement floor than Mrs. Maguire's earthen one. What do you think Mrs. Maguire said ? "

" Something good, I'll be bound," prophesied Seumas, laughing. He knew the lady in question.

Dympna mimicked Mrs. Maguire to life. "'I says, says I, away off you go, ma'am, and tell your good man to quit talkin' so much and puttin' bad into dacent boys' heads, with his drillin' and fightin', and as soon as the country gets the spendin' of its own money we'll have a flure that the likes of you can walk on. Away now, and tell him that from me, and may God forgive him for the trouble he's causin' in these parts. If he can't keep quiet the odd times he does be here, he'd be as well to stay out of the country altogether. He'd never be missed I'm tellin' you.'

" It's all very well for Lady Clonell to talk about a cement floor, but where's the money to come

from ? I'd like to see how she would keep a mud cabin if she had seven children and a cow and a pig to mind. She wouldn't be worryin' about mud floors, I'm thinkin'." Dympna dropped into the vernacular for the moment to emphasise the whimsical humour in her tones, and it lent untold charm to her pretty, even voice.

Seumas laughed unrestrainedly at this picture of the lady of the castle.

Dympna went on. "They are not of us, for Ireland has no aristocrats, as most people understand the word. The majority of them know nothing of the history of which we are the result, and care less. No sympathy helps them to know our needs, and here they are throwing the whole nation into political tumult and strife. And to think that I only realised it fully a few hours ago. I've just been piecing all I know together as I walked along, before you overtook me. That's why I'm saying it all aloud like this now. I'm trying to become accustomed to it. How despicable they are," she cried passionately. "Knowing them I know how France felt when she sent them to Madame Guillotine. Yet they were France's own people, and these are but alien upstarts."

"What a blood-thirsty socialist you are." He was laughing softly, but in his eyes was amazement as they rested on the flushed face. Truly this girl was overwhelming him, faster almost than

he could follow she was revealing depths so foreign to her years. The thought occurred to him that perhaps she had learnt from somebody else, and he voiced it.

"Who has been converting you to such rabid patriotism, Dymphna?"

"Converting me? No one. I've always thought of some of these things, and the more I realise their state the more I want to do something," she replied with such a world of longing in her voice that Seumas Gallagher before he knew it, in a rush of sympathy exclaimed, "You are wonderful, you splendid little Irish Ireland. Would to God there were more like you."

It was the girl who became conscious that if he thought things like that he was on the way to thinking still more. She averted her eyes and her cheeks were pink as she tried to speak lightly.

"None of your blarney, James."

But in her heart she was flattered though she knew that the praise was as yet unmerited. It was sweet to think that these were the sentiments of the boy who long ago she was unable to attract, and on whom she had sworn to wreak revenge by sitting on him unmercifully in her polished, accomplished young ladyhood. Now that the time had come, away down in her heart she knew instinctively that the boarding school had brought her in no whit nearer his level; if he did

not betray it in actual words, she divined that he was capable of doing and feeling as she in her greatest moments could never do or feel. Therefore his flattery was thrice sweet.

"Shall we go home by the castle?" she suggested, as they went down the hill. "Oh, I forgot about your bicycle."

"Never mind. I can send out for it, or come myself to-morrow. By all means let us go by the castle. We cannot take the usual path through the wood, as it is closed to the public. Lord Clonell has converted the grounds into a training camp for Ulster Volunteer officers, and there are pickets everywhere to see that nobody but servants and volunteers go in and out."

"How preposterous! Is that legal—I mean, will the Government not interfere?"

"It is exceedingly strange that they don't, for, of course, it is illegal. They make no secret of the fact that they are preparing for civil war."

"Surely it is not so bad as that. If the worst comes to the worst they could do very little harm."

"I am not so sure of that, and," looking around the beautiful hills and valleys, "this would be magnificent fighting ground; they couldn't wish for better; besides, they are splendidly equipped and drilled. For over two years they have been in constant training all over the North. During all that time they have been importing arms and

ammunition in ever increasing quantities from England and Belgium and Germany. I hear the latest addition is a consignment of machine guns, of which they have already four or five at the Clonell camp. Their instructors are the best ; all of the British Conservative, aristocrat, Unionist crowd, who have seen service in Africa and India, and most of whom are still, strange as it may seem, in the army. Then their women folk have an ambulance section, equipped as only an unlimited amount of money can equip ; which means every modern improvement known, and hosts of doctors and trained nurses. Money can do almost anything, and this mongrel group," he smiled as he quoted her words, " have everything that the world can give at their disposal, for many of them are the ruling powers in England as well as in Ireland. But—their motives cannot be pure. They are fighting for their own pockets, not for the cause of democracy, and, believe me, the day of the autocrat is waning fast. And as to this menace, surely God will mark a limit to the suffering of a nation, which has suffered, is still suffering only because it remained faithful to its religious beliefs."

The last words were uttered in a low shy tone, the tone of a man who loved his faith with the great romantic love that links Faith and Fatherland in every patriot heart, and the shy reverence

appealed to every fibre of Dyinpna's being. She felt that, moment by moment, she was being drawn slowly, irrevocably, to this man walking beside her ; her ideas, her dreams, her very soul, were finding counterparts in his. It was easier to speak to him of all she held sacred than to anyone she had known in her short life, with the exception, perhaps, of Sister Columba, and for once the restlessness in her eyes was cleared from their depths and only peace and hope remained as she replied softly :

" I feel that way, too. Our faith, our nationalism and that little strip of ocean that testifies to our claim as a nation, have kept Ireland clean and good ; have kept out the worst sort of vice and modernism, that is taken as a matter of course by people like Lord Clonell because they have lived their lives in its midst, though I don't mean to imply that they are necessarily tainted by it ; but they look with lenience on things that cause us horror, and if right wins in the end, I think it is the good in Ireland that should win. If Wolfe Tone and those others had foreseen that when we were at last offered a measure of freedom some of us immediately refused it, I wonder whether they would have considered us worth the lives they gave up to us. It is amusing, England now on our side against her own settlers. Of course the Government is with us ? " This in alarm.

"I suppose so," doubtfully. "They ought to have put down the drilling at once, though ; two years and a half of outspoken, blatant preparation for rebellion if the Home Rule Bill becomes an Act and is enforced, is a very serious thing to overlook, as it has been overlooked. The explanation of it is, that the main body of the Government is in sympathy with the Orangemen. We are going to organise a force of Irish volunteers to ensure some protection for the country simply because of the Government's inaction. I tell you frankly, Dympna, many of us are so sceptical about English help now that things have gone so far that we are determined to rely on it no longer. Lord Clonell boasted on the twelfth of July that neither British officers nor British soldiers would raise a hand to fight against them. Their leaders talk open rebellion in Parliament ; they threaten England ; threaten the King and ministers and boast of the powerful continental monarch who will help them. There have been German visitors several times at Clonell Castle of late, and I daresay you saw in this morning's paper that the Orange leader had an invitation to lunch with the Kaiser at Homburg. In the event of Home Rule being passed they boast he will send an army that will relieve England of all further trouble by annexing Ireland to his dominions ; and that he will be welcomed as their forefathers before them welcomed another William.

Well, if the Government is going to listen to that sort of talk, and let them import arms at the rate they are doing, it looks jolly like as if they were going to give them a God-speed when they start marching from Belfast to Cork on the joyful mission of exterminating the papists, root, branch and seed, and proceed to make a paying little concern out of our island for their own small but powerful colony. It is funny right enough," he remarked sententiously as they entered the High Street and stopped opposite Donnelly's shop.

"Come along in and have tea with us," urged Dympna.

Seumas appeared to like the suggestion, but he refused with evident reluctance. "I must go and relieve father ; I know he wants to go out before six, but I'll come up after closing time. I have an important message to deliver. Father wants you to do something in connection with the volunteers. He wants your help."

"Not really, Seumas ? You are not joking ? Are you really and truly serious ?" Her whole face was alight, her slight figure tense and a small hand grasped his arm tightly in her excitement.

"I am not joking. You shall hear all to-night."

"I am dying to know what it is, but I shan't ask now. The anticipation is enough to make me happy till then."

"Hope you enjoy it properly then," he called

as with the usual Gaelic greeting he swung off as she disappeared into the shop, only to emerge and call gaily after the retreating figure, "close early, Seumas," belying her assurance that anticipation was food enough for happiness.

He turned, nodded a smiling assent, raised his tweed cap and was gone, and a row of gleaming teeth in a strong brown face, black eyes dancing with fun and a fleeting vision of wavy black hair, were singularly prominent in Dynnpna's memory for the remainder of the evening.

## CHAPTER VII

DYMPNA stood at the shop door looking aimlessly around. A tremendously important event was to happen that night ; she was to go to a dance—her first dance. So full of excitement was she that she could scarce sit still a moment. In and out, upstairs and downstairs she wandered all the afternoon, thinking darkness and dressing time would never come. It was a real December day, damp and chill, and with a shiver she turned to go in when a small voice from the region of her feet remarked casually, “Hello ! Dympna.”

She looked down and beheld a small ragged urchin of some seven years seated upon the damp pavement, his upturned boots showing small blue toes and the fringe of stockings that were once black but now hesitated between purple and green.

“Oh, hello ! ” She did not recognise him as one of the squad of youngsters that Clonell boasted. “I fear you have the advantage of me, sir,” she added, smiling slightly.

As this was Greek to him he pretended he had not heard and started to make a noise that was

meant to be a whistle, as he gazed unconcernedly in front of him.

"What's your name?" she queried.

"Gillespie; me father works in Simmon's Scutch Mill," he returned obligingly.

"I see! Haven't you another name besides Gillespie?"

"Aye, Bob. A'say there's the fish-man."

"Have you always lived in Clonell, Bob?"

"Naw, we came here last week; we live up Jail Hill, me mother's dead and there's only me an' Da. Da's an Ulster Volunteer. A'say there's the fish-man."

"Really, that's most interesting." Dympna was filled with compassion for the mite, who however, seemed quite content with his outlook on the world. His eyes were fixed intently on the fish cart coming up the street.

"He does have oranges," he continued. "Oh! look, there's John Gormley buyin' one. A' wish a' had a penny." He sighed heavily, but glanced up sideways and, on unexpectedly meeting the full laughing gaze of Dympna's eyes, immediately became interested in an ancient nest under the eaves above.

Dympna disappeared indoors. "Give me a penny, mother, please," she said to Mrs. Donnelly who sat sewing behind the counter. Her mother dipped into the cash drawer and slid a couple of

coppers across the counter. As she did so an eager, impish face peered in at the door and she understood.

"If you begin that sort of thing your life won't be worth living," she remonstrated.

"Oh, I'll chance it," laughed the girl.

Bob stood expectantly on the step. "Now you must earn this penny before you get it. Let me see—"

"We could have a scramble," he suggested.

"But who do you propose to scramble with?"

This was a poser. At last, "There's our dog; I could go and get him—or you."

"I'm afraid that would be rather a one-sided affair."

"Naw, it wouldn't, I'd gi' the dog a chance."

"If the ground were not so damp I'd ask you to turn somersaults from here to the corner."

Bob was on his hands and tip-toes in a flash.

"You must not, Bob; get up at once. You will get wet. Do you hear me?"

But Bob paid not the slightest atom of attention. "O—o—one, to—oo—oo," he chanted. A gust of wind blew up his coat-tails and the sight thus displayed was not edifying. Over sitting had been more than Bob's pants could stand and there were no pants left where once they had been. Neither had poor Bob anything in the line of underwear on this cold December day. But such is life. "Three

—ee—ee,” he sang and over he went. “Good God ! but it’s quare and hard,” he exclaimed vigorously, as he came with a loud slap into sitting posture on the pavement. He sprang to his feet, rubbed himself gently where he had come into contact with the ground and contemplated sadly the expanse of pavement that still stretched between him and the corner, then looked back at Dympna. She was bursting with suppressed laughter, but appeared inexorable. He squared his small thin shoulders and down he went again. He peeped through his legs to see if she were no nearer relenting, and she laughed outright and tended the pennies. Next moment Bob was across the street and had opened negotiations with the fishman.

“ I do wish it were tea time at least,” said Dympna impatiently, as she retreated indoors.

“ I do, too, because you are like a hen on a hot griddle,” responded her mother. “ Why don’t you go for a walk ? ”

“ I don’t want to be tired before the night begins.”

“ Well, do sit down, or take a book and lie down. By the way some one was saying that fourteen or fifteen motors full are coming quite long distances.”

“ I say ! Isn’t that great ? It’s well I’ve got a pretty dress. Do you think it will be as pretty as any there, mother ? ” she enquired anxiously.

"I'm sure I don't know. To me it looks gorgeous. I never had anything like it. In my day white muslin was the height of fashion at one of these dances, but now it's silks and satins and shoes to match and bare arms and necks and string bands. I wonder what they will have next. I would rather have had white for you, you are so young. I am not satisfied with that green, though it really is a wonderful creation. I had no idea it would be such a success."

"I love it—just love it," exclaimed the girl happily. "You see, white, unless it is something unique and on somebody unique, is apt to be ordinary. Now that shimmery green is just my colour, and I do so want to look nice at my first dance," she added childishly.

She was such a mixture of the mature-thinking woman and the child, this young girl. To-day the thinker, the practical idealist, gave way to a world of childish excitement, though perhaps it would be more correct to say a surface layer of childish excitement, for underneath was the deep stirring tumult caused by the knowledge that her first dance with a man was to be with Seumas Gallagher. It was for his eyes alone that the dress which had cost her such thought was planned. The fact that she had chosen green would please him, she knew, and it was not only because it was her colour that she had insisted on having it.

She took her mother's advice and lay down on the sofa in the little sitting-room. She was glad the dance was drawing crowds from distant parts, she meditated, for in a crowd she could perhaps have him more to herself than if there were few strangers. Would he think her pretty? she wondered. Would he tell her so? Surely he would bring her to supper, and up there in the room which she had helped that morning to make comfortable with borrowed arm-chairs and palms, surely he would tell her some of the things that she ached and longed to hear.

There was no doubt about it, Dympna had the love disease with all the intensity of her nineteen years. During her four months at home no day had passed without at least an hour spent in Seumas Gallagher's company. The Volunteer First Aid classes of which she was organising secretary were held at his house; at the Gaelic League classes she was his assistant; and when he had a spare moment in the evenings he had dropped into the habit of running up for a chat with Dympna and her mother. Girls of nineteen are on the look out for love and in this case the wish was father to the thought. The admiration she felt for his intellectual powers; for the soul of him that had given up what so many of his age would have deemed everything that made life worth living; the respect for the companion who was helping to develop

and widen her ideas and showing her how to adapt them to narrow circumstances, had of late formed a separate self and a new self had edged its way to the foreground, a self that thought only of the physical attraction of the man. At first it had only peeped out occasionally but within the last few weeks it had completely obsessed her and the infatuation had become exaggerated to enormous dimensions during the ensuing fosterage. She craved for, yet dreaded tangible proof that his thoughts too were full of her. The present stage was so delightfully painfully uncertain. It gave opportunity for such dreams and flights of imagination. She had not hitherto thought of Seumas's feelings in the matter. Though the black eyes had never betrayed anything more meaning than teasing laughter or the frank admiration for and approval of her over-weaning desires to work for the revival of the Irish nation, still she knew better than he himself knew that he preferred her society to any other.

As she lay looking into the fire she felt a great overwhelming desire that he should realise and tell her all she meant to him, ere the night was out.

Later on as she dressed the desire grew and grew with all the feverish intensity of wildest infatuation. From desire came the certainty that it *would* happen as she wished. And all thought of disappointment, of non-realisation vanished. Just for

one moment her eyes had grown black with fear when flashed across her brain "Suppose he doesn't," but it was only momentary and soon forgotten in the vision of loveliness that was reflected back at her from the wardrobe mirror.

The gas-light being insufficient for such an important and lengthy toilet, it was supplemented by candles arranged on various brackets and tables so as to shed their light to best advantage. One of these in one hand and a hand-mirror in the other Dympna was having a last critical survey as her mother entered. The older woman halted and caught her breath for a second, then coming forward said with assumed lightness, "What a swell we are!"

"Yes, ain't I nice," said Dympna complacently. "I'll stand over here and you'll have a better view of me."

The dress fell in clinging straight lines of shimmering grass-green silk, toned into soft rich lights and shades by its over-dress of soft black gossamer; a swathing of gold lace at the waist in which was carelessly thrust a big purple and gold orchid; the slim gleaming white arms and the soft white throat, and above all the mass of brown red hair and the great muddy, restless, fathomless eyes. The mother was full of pride as she gazed upon her. Surely there would be none like her. And she was right, Dympna was the belle of the ball.

In spite of all persuasion, Mrs. Donnelly could not be induced to attend the dance, so her place as chaperone was taken by Mrs. Duncan, John Gallagher's sister, who had come to Clonell for the occasion. She was late in calling for her charge, and when Dympna entered, the cold stilted atmosphere that universally pervades the ballroom before a country dance had disappeared with the first soft, seductive notes of the string band that was one of the attractions of the evening.

It was all new to her and she forgot to feel self-conscious in her interest in the crowd of well-dressed women and men in evening dress gathered at the far end of the hall. She had heard previous dances discussed and expected a good deal, but she had never seen men in evening dress except in magazine pictures, and the sleek well-groomed appearance of these, the dazzling shirt fronts and nicely creased trousers were wonderfully good to look upon in her eyes. She did not know any of them with the exception of an elderly local doctor and equally elderly veterinary surgeon ; but nevertheless the group secured her undivided attention, so much so that she forgot to wonder where Seumas Gallagher was until Mrs. Duncan's voice recalled her.

" I wonder where Seumas has disappeared to," she said, looking around.

" Seumas," exclaimed Dympna, remembering

and flushing slightly. "I have promised him the first dance. I suppose he'll be here in a minute."

But the first dance began and Seumas did not come and John Gallagher himself came along and claimed Dympna. He was an indifferent partner and the floor was exceedingly crowded, so they slid along in a leisurely manner and talked. By degrees Dympna realised that people were looking at her—everybody seemed to be looking at her, and she seemed to catch the eyes of every man whirling round. Some of them smiled and she smiled, too, in sheer good fellowship, and all the time John Gallagher was watching her thoughtfully.

"Clonell has secured the laurels to-night," he laughed as they sat down, "you look very lovely, Dympna, as you know of course."

She laughed back happily, though she was conscious away far down inside her that things had gone wrong; Seumas had not been there to claim his first dance.

## CHAPTER VIII

"COME out of that corner, child; everybody wants to be introduced—I mean all those strangers, come along," and Mrs. Duncan bore Dympna away.

In the interval of a dance, Lilian Reilly, a publican's daughter and one of the few catholic girls of her own age and class in Clonell, seated herself beside Dympna.

"It's such ages since I've seen you," she remarked, with a jealous glance at her companion's frock. "Do excuse me, but I can't help admiring your dress. I didn't know you were in Belfast lately. We might have gone down together. I got mine from Madame Lucille—eight guineas."

"Oh, what a lot!" exclaimed Dympna in surprise. "It's very pretty," she added, feeling that she had not said the proper thing. She endeavoured to make up by being friendly. "I had mine made at home. Mrs. Cullen came in every day and between mother and her, and myself as dictator, we put it together."

"Well, I never!" and the tone said, "I don't believe a word of it."

"Do you know all the people here, Lilian ? I seem to know so few."

"Yes, I know most of them. That crowd," pointing to the group of strangers who seemed to assemble again after each dance, "go to all the dances for twenty miles around. They are real sports—go anywhere for a kick. You know Mrs. Lanigan, the bank manager's wife, that's she with the awful show of back."

"Oh ! I did not recognise her in evening dress. Yes, it is very low. It gave me a cold shiver down my spine when I saw it first. And the girls with her in house dresses?" "

"Those are the Beaumonts. They wouldn't bother dressing for an affair like this. They merely have to show in for shame sake, because, being papists, their father has to live by his papist clients. I fancy they're a bit let down when they see all these chaps from A—— here. Most of them go to *their* dances too. I expect they're saying now how slow this is. They always have shaded lights and sitting-out accommodation, but Father Mullen wouldn't let us have such things at a St. Vincent de Paul dance," sighed Lilian regretfully.

"They are all Catholics here I suppose ? "

"Practically all. I see a few Protestant fellows, but no girls of course."

"Why no girls ? "

" Well, the fellows come from a business point of view ; some of them just look in for an hour to let people see them here, but one or two who are really fond of a dance and a change from their own crowd are glad of the excuse of their attendance being good business."

There are times when one has the uncomfortable feeling that one is being stared at, and there are again times when the eyes are attracted involuntarily in a certain direction without any previous mental notice. Dympna had no forewarning of the intent gaze of a pair of lazy blue eyes till she found her own held by them and realised that they must have been watching her for some time. Their owner leant carelessly against the door opposite, tall and loosely built, his hands thrust in the pockets of his faultless evening suit. A thrill of excitement crept through her. He was so very good looking. Just the man a girl could not help adoring, close-cut fair hair, straight clean features and a small fair moustache. And the indolent ease of him !

Her curiosity could no longer be restrained and she was about to question her companion when Lilian uttered an exclamation. She too was looking towards the doorway.

" I say ! If that isn't Sydney Hamilton ! I wonder when *he* came home."

" Hamilton," repeated Dympna.

"Old Hamilton, the solicitor's son. He was at college when we were kids, so you wouldn't know him. He's just passed his final exam. and is going to practise here with his father, I believe. Lord ! won't the Beaumont girls jump out of their skins when they see him here. I didn't think old Hamilton would let a son of his put a foot in a Catholic hall for all the money going. They're real bitter Presbyterians. Not that Sydney cares what he is I'm sure."

Dympna had averted her eyes and was listening with interest, but all the time she knew he was watching her and she was flattered. When she could resist it no longer she looked again, and at that moment Seumas Gallagher appeared in the doorway too, and the two men shook hands. She watched them curiously, one fair and indolent, a polished man of the world, the other dark as a gypsy, his sinewy body radiating life, vitality and power. At the moment Seumas seemed queerly out of place with the soothing, snaky music. She wished he was not wearing his ordinary dark blue serge suit. She had thought him so attractive in it hitherto and probably would again, but it was not in the picture with the pretty silken dresses of the women with whom he would dance. True, only the minority of the men were in evening dress, but she wished heartily that Seumas had been one of them, since she saw him beside that indolent,

correct figure. Her mood of the moment was a new mood in Dympna, and in it all the passionate longings of the day became drowned in the novelty of new experience and the wholesale adoration that had been her lot since she entered the hall. She was realising that after all Seumas, who had hitherto filled her world, was not the only man in it (though of course she liked him better than all the others) and that at the moment she could have anyone she wanted in the room. She was only human. She did not mean to be unfaithful, but she wanted badly to test her powers, and the dull black of the other's attire and the fairness of him appealed to her in this mood. Who can blame her ?

At the door Sydney Hamilton was saying :  
“ Do you know the girl in green, Gallagher ? I wish you would introduce me ; I have been watching her and she dances like a fairy.”

Seumas looked across the room and the blood rushed to his head. It was to Dympna Donnelly Hamilton was referring ; that vision of glinting green and gold was Dympna, but a Dympna that he had never seen before. There was a tiny touch of queenly arrogance in her pose as she leant back in her chair. Already, she was scenting her power. How very, very lovely she was ! Why on earth hadn't he realised it before ? And for the first time Seumas was conscious that others, too, would

appreciate her. A spasm of jealousy shot through him. Why had Hamilton singled her out ? He could have danced with those of his own set who were there, the Beaumonts and Mrs. Lanigan. He was a Protestant so of course he, Seumas, need not think seriously about him, but he wished he had asked for an introduction to anybody else in the room. Yet what could he do ? So with an assumed cheerfulness he led the way across as the couples were gliding off in a waltz.

Dympna knew they were coming. She barely listened while Seumas explained his unavoidable absence and introduced Hamilton.

"Are you engaged for this dance ?" he murmured, "may I have the pleasure ?" and with a parting smile at Seumas she was borne off before he knew what had happened. His heart sank and he did the only thing he could do, and had his first dance with Lilian Reilly instead of Dympna. He answered his partner in abstracted monosyllables, till she, beginning to understand, remarked viciously "Dympna and Sydney Hamilton are going strong, eh, Seumas ?"

He looked around. Dympna's partner was clasping her much more closely than was necessary ; his head was bent over her laughing face and they danced in perfect harmony. He was a product of Dublin ball rooms and, steering her in and out, he never once seemed to find it necessary to remove

his gaze from her face. A dull ache, that was almost a physical pain, gripped Seumas Gallagher's heart.

If he had asserted his rights even then, demanded all the dances she had promised him, swept her off her feet, Dympna Donnelly's life might have been a different one though hardly an ordinary one. Instead, he made his way to the billiard-room, lighted a cigarette and stared moodily at the players for half an hour before returning to the hall. It was supper time and people were passing up and down to the supper-room and in the thinning crowd Dympna was nowhere to be seen. Seumas was by this time madly, blindly jealous. After all at twenty-three he was in many ways a boy. Henceforth, little of the boy was to be left.

Mrs. Duncan came up to him where he leaned against the piano, all the life gone out from his black eyes. She alone could say what she liked to her nephew, and she touched his arm with a light firm touch.

"Cheer up, boy; don't take it so badly. You're missing all the fun. Where on earth were you that you didn't turn up to claim your dance?"

"Father Mullen brought a crowd of visitors across to our place just as I was leaving and I had to wait and come across with them. He went off and left me to look after them, so what could I do?"

"Nothing, but it's unfortunate. She was awfully disappointed when you did not turn up. Now *he's* got her and he doesn't intend to let her go ; they've danced every dance together and people are talking like anything ; as he's new, he's the catch of the night, and the girls are wild, so they'll not let *her* off with it. She's the sort I dare not warn, either, because I don't think she cares a pin what anybody says about her. Anyway, she'll realise to-morrow that she has neglected you and probably make up for it. It's the child's first dance and the attention she was getting on all sides till he proceeded to monopolise her was enough to turn anybody's head, so go and flirt with one of those nice strangers and enjoy yourself."

Seumas turned away abruptly. "It's gone too far for that," he said tersely, and as he went Anne Duncan knew only too well that it had.

Up in the improvised sitting-room Dympna was leaning back luxuriously in a wicker arm-chair behind the palms that she had helped to place. Her cheeks were flushed and in her eyes was a half-amused, half-triumphant expression. Sydney Hamilton had made no secret of his capitulation. He was a most fascinating flirt, and Dympna, knowing nothing of flirtation, was immensely flattered and altogether infatuated. They had gone into the supper-room only to find it crowded to a degree, mostly with people who were deter-

mined to get the worth of their five-shilling tickets and who were consuming trifle and jellies, and coffee and cakes, not to speak of sandwiches and fruit salads, at a rate that made one shudder to think of the results ; so he had conceived the idea of ensconcing her there while he himself went in search of coffee and cake. It was so nice to be waited on and cared for like this, she was thinking when her dream of the early evening—or was it yesterday, for it had gone twelve—crossed her mind, and a feeling of shame overcame her. She had forgotten him, forgotten completely Seumas with whom she had thought herself madly in love ; but surely it could not have been love if it had died away so quickly on meeting a fresh face. How changeable she was. But of course she liked Seumas awfully. There was nobody in the world quite like him. She dared not even think of what Clonell would be like without him, yet all that pulsing excitement to which, had she only known it, she had worked herself up, completely evaporated at the moment she had first met Sydney Hamilton. There was a vague pricking of conscience that said she had treated her friend badly in neglecting to give him an opportunity of dancing with her, but that she lulled to rest by telling herself that he would not miss her ; he had never given her any reason to expect that he would ; she had been judging that he cared for her by instinct, which

meant nothing ; her instinct had been completely ruled by her wishes. So she continued to argue with her conscience till Sydney Hamilton appeared. He found her as willing to be pleased and as pleasing as ever, and if he noticed the change in her expression he only knew it to hold a world of irresistible fascination, for something had stirred into being the restlessness and turbulence in the depths of Dympna's lovely eyes. Again she was striving to understand, not this time anything so new as politics but the thing that is ancient as the world, love. Yes, she was still on the look out for love ; but the looking was to be long and she was to experience many other sensations before finding it.

Sydney pulled his chair nearer and settled for a comfortable flirtation.

" I came here to-night expecting to be properly bored, as I usually am at the first country dance I attend after leaving town, but what a surprise I got," he began.

" Why did you come if you were going to be bored ?—I hate the word ; life's too short for that sort of rot ; personally, I simply wouldn't go to anything I wasn't going to enjoy. Why did you come ? " she repeated.

This was somewhat disconcerting. Sydney wanted badly to reach the romantic stage. " I suppose it was fate."

As soon as he said it he wished he had not, because Dympna blushed hotly. One more practised would have laughed it off. But the queer thing about it was that he felt it really was fate. Even in this short time he recognised her influence over him.

A somewhat embarrassing silence followed. Then Hamilton continued in more matter-of-fact tones. "It's strange that we have lived in the same town all our lives and we have never met before."

"We have both been away so much—you at college and I at the convent. As things are in Clonell it is quite possible we shan't meet again." There was a little teasing devil in her that could not resist the dig.

He sat up quickly. "What do you mean?"

"Dances only occur once or twice a year."

"Yes?"

"Your friends are not my friends."

"But—"

"But—" she laughed heartily. It was he who was now embarrassed and she was enjoying his embarrassment thoroughly.

So few people had the courage to allude to the class and religious distinctions that existed, that her apparent amusement over them, the attitude of being completely outside them, an observant onlooker, but whose no concern they were, was

quite new to him. This individuality impressed him.

He rose to the occasion. "I have a motor-bike and side-car; we might in future have some spins together."

"How jolly! I have never been in either a motor or side-car in my life," she exclaimed.

"How few of our smart set would have acknowledged the like," he thought and was pleased. He would give this little girl a thumping good time, and he didn't give a damn what people said. It did not occur to him that it is not the man but the woman who suffers from scandal-mongers.

"Well let's fix up something for to-morrow afternoon, or will you be too tired then?"

"Oh, no."

"Shall I call for you at three o'clock then and we can run over to Armagh, have tea, go to the pictures and get back by eight o'clock? You think your mother won't object?"

"Mother, why should she? I know she wants me to have a good time."

He knew quite well that her mother *would* object and he was quite prepared to find the expedition would never come off: but he was determined to see her often nevertheless.

She interrupted his thoughts. "Don't you think we ought to go down? I'm dying for a dance."

"I'd much rather have you here all to myself, but if you want to go down of course we must," he said, rising reluctantly. He stood looking down at her, barring the way. They were both thinking the same thing, how deliciously near the other was, and the air was full of thrills. There was nobody in the room, and the laughter and music below seemed very far away. She stirred uneasily under the intensity of his gaze and instantly his arms were round her and he was whispering somewhat disjointedly. "Dympna, may I have a kiss?"

Every bit of her better self revolted against the request; she ought to be insulted, she ought to tell him what she thought of his conduct, but instead the physical attraction of him overcame her and she nodded silently.

"You will give me all the waltzes to-night," he murmured as they passed downstairs together. Dympna's heart was thumping rapidly and her whole being tingling with the memory of her first kiss.

When they entered the hall a square dance was in progress, so they sat down together. People looked at them and smiled significantly, as they are wont to do on such occasions, and the girl felt that every one in the room knew what had taken place. A devil of defiance gripped her. What did she care what they said? Then her eyes fell on Seumas Gallagher and Anne Duncan, his aunt,

dancing together in the set at the top of the room. After all she did care what *they* thought. She hoped with all her heart they would not guess that she had gone so far. They were both such dear congenial friends, friends she would not be without for all the world, she reflected enthusiastically, for when one is intensely happy and triumphant it is so easy to love all mankind and appreciate special friends tenfold.

Dympna and her companion had passed the stage when speech matters and they sat silently watching the dancers, now uproarious in their merriment, for it was growing late and they had warmed well to their work. They had panned out their sets so as to secure the company most congenial. Right up beside the band danced the silk and chiffon-clad women and the men of their choice. In the centre of the room, pirouetted in dignified correctness black-clad shop-girls, and pink-and-white besashed muslin people with beaux, sleek of hair, Sunday-suited and shod for the dance. At the end where Dympna sat was a somewhat hilarious crowd among whom could be described Mrs. Lanigan's maid and the hotel boots, the damsels in silken blouses and trim skirts, and the men with footgear that were the despair of the officious master of ceremonies, who had spent the best part of the day doing leg exercise with candle-grease on the floor and encouraging a number of urchins

to dance French chalk in on top of it, to get it into breakneck condition.

As the result of this condition a girl came to grief none too gracefully and, under cover of the laughter and rush to her assistance of various swains, Sydney Hamilton brought Dympna's hand from her lap to the seat between them and held it there, and she did not resist. He was carrying her slowly but surely off her feet.

Bending over her he asked, "Who are you going home with?"

"Mrs. Duncan and the Gallaghers."

"What rotten luck for me," he said earnestly. He too was becoming more and more smitten as the night went on. Dympna also considered the luck bad and she felt a shade of resentment against the Gallaghers, which quickly faded into shame as amid a sudden hush a succession of soft chords sounded and looking up she saw Anne Duncan at the piano and Seumas standing beside her. He was going to sing.

Ah! How well she knew those chords. Were not the words they preceded written across her heart? The voice of the singer was more than ordinary. A good tenor voice is a rare gift, an irresistible one, and there was a world of emotion in this one. To Anne Duncan it held a note of passionate entreaty, despairing appeal to all that was noble and grand in the girl sitting so still at

the end of the room. If so, the girl did not recognise it ; it did not reach her. She was conscious only of the emotion the song invariably stirred within her ; the emotion that made her want to lay her all at the feet of her Dark Rosaleen, and a sound that was uncommonly like a sob broke from her lips as she echoed in her heart the words that with a tremor filled the room.

“ When all beside a vigil keep,  
The West's asleep, the West's asleep ;  
Alas ! and well may Erin weep,  
When Connaught lies in slumber deep ;  
There lake and plain smile fair and free,  
'Mid rocks their guardian chivalry.  
Sing, oh ! let man learn liberty  
From crushing wind and lashing sea.”

When the last notes died away, followed by a tremendous outburst of applause, Dympna realised that Sydney Hamilton had been watching her. There was the queer restless expression in the eyes that returned his gaze uneasily.

“ I love that song,” she said with an evident effort.

“ It's a pretty thing,” he agreed conventionally, and it was as if a chill breeze blew across her face bringing cold realisation with it. There was admiration, nay, affection in his blue eyes but understanding none. No, he knew not the hopes, the ideals, the passionate love of native land that

was stirring from sleep the Ireland of the day. To him that love would savour of papism. He belonged to another world, where nothing mattered but money-making and enjoyment. But in the friendship that would ensue between them she would convert him ; show him how life could be made really worth while ; teach him to see things from more than one point of view. Still, the chill did not pass immediately. For the present an impenetrable barrier must remain between them.

He was Orange and she was Green.

## CHAPTER IX

"I CAN'T think where all those cars were going. I do wish I knew," said Anne Duncan thoughtfully.

She and Dymphna Donnelly were seated on either side of a dancing wood fire in the sitting-room of her cottage home. In the far corner of the room two boys of ten and twelve respectively were poring industriously over exercises for school on the morrow. Their father was master of the village school and there was no escaping by excuses where he was concerned. The elder boy raised his head with a sigh of relief, and accosted his brother in a stage whisper.

"I'm finished, Eoin; hurry up and we'll go to the kitchen and spin tops till bedtime."

"In Gaelic, child," reminded Anne Duncan softly in that language. "Both of you can go. Eoin can finish his lessons in the morning."

There was a delighted scramble and the boys disappeared like rabbits into a hole and immediately after sounds indicative of extraordinary lung power were resounding through the house.

"I wonder!" echoed Dymphna. "I counted over a hundred. They created quite a sensation

in the village. I don't suppose Abergally has ever seen so many motor-cars in its life."

"Did you notice any from Clonell besides Lord Clonell's and Gibson's?"

Anne Duncan had been dying to ask this question since the commotion caused by the unusual traffic through the village which was on the main road to Belfast had commenced a little after six o'clock that evening.

"No, why?"

Anne remained silent a minute, then slowly: "It must be some sort of Orange gathering when Lord Clonell and Gibson were there—probably an Ulster volunteer meeting—and I thought perhaps Sydney Hamilton might have been among them. I believe his father and Gibson are very thick."

The girl blushed painfully. During the three months that had elapsed since the night she had first met Sydney she and Anne Duncan had become fast friends, yet it was the first time the elder woman had mentioned his name. Dympna had known the present moment to be inevitable, but she was and would have been at any time unprepared for it.

Mrs. Duncan leant forward now and looked straight into her companion's eyes. "Tell me, Dympna, is there anything more than a flirtation between you and Sydney Hamilton?"

There was no reply.

"Do you like him very much?" she asked softly, laying her hand lightly on Dympna's shoulder.

"I don't know," was the hesitating reply.

"Is he in love with you?"

"He says so."

"Well if he says so does he not want you to return his love? does 'I don't know' do for him?"

A flash of mischief relieved the seriousness of the girl's face for a second. "When I say it, yes."

"But, Mavourneen, what it is all going to lead to; do you intend to marry him?"

"Good gracious I never thought of such a thing!"

"Has he ever hinted at the like?"

"I don't think so," then decidedly, "Of course not."

"Then you would not care really if he married somebody else——"

"Oh, he won't."

"But he will—some day."

The girl set her lips in a straight line. "He won't," she said curtly.

"Of course if you are determined to keep him he won't, but is it right to use your influence over him to make both your lives unhappy? The man's only flesh and blood, and you ought not to let things go too far. The crisis must come some time and then——"

“ Then ? ”

“ You are a Catholic and he is a Presbyterian. You are a nationalist, an Irish Ireland ; he is a Unionist and has been brought up to hate Catholic and Irish Ireland and everything it stands for.”

“ But suppose I did want to marry him, and I don’t want to marry anybody, Sydney is broad-minded. He has knocked about too much to have silly narrow views about religion. He might become a Catholic.”

Anne Duncan laughed harshly. “ My dear girl, surely, surely you have realised before this that death would be preferable to Catholicism where a Northern Protestant is concerned. I don’t say that he may not be tolerant enough ; though I wouldn’t count on that if I were you. What’s bred in the bone will out in the flesh some time or other. But making the wild supposition that for a moment he contemplated it, why, his life would be made a hell upon earth by his relatives and friends. They would beggar him, ruin him. Love, Dympna, is of tremendous dimensions but I’d like to see the love that would convert Orange into Green in the North of Ireland. It would indeed be worth having.”

“ You are making him out a terrible monster entirely, Anne, and you’d like him awfully if you knew him.”

“ I’m sure I should. I don’t mean to run him

down at all, I am merely trying to make you see that your present friendship—I suppose I may call it that—with him cannot possibly last. Your ideas, hopes, aspirations are as wide apart as the gulf that divides you. If you were a girl with less strong opinions, less high ideals, less passionate love for Erin, then the danger of friction would be less too. As it is, can't you see that he will fall short of your ideals, that his opinions on the things that count would rouse in you active antagonism? Because of that antagonism *you* might find it easy to drift away from him, but will he find it so easy to let you drift? I take it that he will be the sufferer."

"Well, why does he pursue me? Doesn't *he* know all that too?"

"Of course he does; but the thing with which a non-catholic forgets to reckon fully, is religion. He may be hoping that you would be the one to give in."

"Anne! How could you even hint at such a thing! My faith; the faith that makes life worth living. Oh, Anne, you ought not to think such things," and her voice choked with indignation.

"There you are; but you must remember he can't know what your religion means to you. It is not possible." Then in a milder tone, "Have you ever discussed politics with him?"

"Never. I tried to get him to talk about Home

Rule once or twice, but he evaded me each time."

"There you are again."

"I wish you wouldn't say 'there you are.' It's almost as exasperating as 'I told you so,'" she laughed back good-humouredly. "I say isn't that clock about an hour fast?" she exclaimed suddenly, scanning in alarm the face of the small black marble clock on the mantelpiece.

"No, it's quite right."

"*What!* Nearly half-past eight. I'll have to fly all the way home."

"But you're not going home to-night, child," remonstrated the elder woman aghast.

"Of course. This is the night of our ceilidh and Seumas is depending upon me to be there. I told you this morning that I would have to go."

"Yes, but I thought I could persuade you to stay."

"I would gladly, but I simply must get back for it."

In spite of Mrs. Duncan's protestations Dympna would not be prevailed upon to stay, and soon she was standing outside the gate drawing on her gloves, while Diarmuid Duncan pumped up the back tyre of her bicycle.

"I am not at all happy to think of you cycling six miles on a night so dark as this. I do wish you

would stay, Dympna. Seumas will find plenty of helpers."

"No, really, Anne. I can't possibly miss being there. If I don't attend faithfully how can I expect others, whom I am endeavouring to inspire with enthusiasm for the language, to attend? I will do it easily in a little over half an hour. I say, Diarmuid! if you turn the water on full the carbide won't last me half-way home," she called to Diarmuid who was struggling with her lamp. "That's better! He's a great Irishman and he'll soon be able to speak the Gaelic as well as Seumas, eh, Diarmuid?"

"He ought to, seeing that he hears little else spoken in the house," responded his mother.

Dympna said good-bye to the boy, then held out her hand to Anne. "You make me ashamed of the little I am doing, Anne, but I want you to know, that because I am friendly with Sydney Hamilton, I am no more neutral than I was when I came from school. I have not let that interfere with my work and it never will interfere with it. With me, as with you, Ireland is, and always will be, next to God. You believe me, Anne?" she pleaded anxiously.

"My dear, I believe you. Come and see me soon again. Good night and God bless you."

There was a perplexed expression in Anne Duncan's eyes as she watched the slight figure

spring lightly to her machine and the rays of light from the lamp trail away into the blackness. How she hated the thought of her riding in the darkness those six miles of lonely road.

During the first mile Dympna whistled gaily but strive as she would against it the darkness was having a most depressing effect on her. She had often cycled alone at night before and thought nothing of it. Always her imagination saw ghosts in the weird shapes of the trees thrown into dim relief by the light of her lamp ; or she was startled by rabbits scuttling across the road, getting into range of the light and becoming blinded and unable to move till she had succeeded in passing them. To-night she thought the rabbits were rats, and the trees grinning monkeys and horrible bears. To distract her attention from these things she deliberately began to think over all that Anne Duncan had been saying and which otherwise she would have striven, even in thought, to evade. She reviewed in a detail that came almost uncannily before her mental vision those three months since she had first met Sydney Hamilton ; her mother's refusal to let her carry out the projected motor ride to Armagh, and her, Dympna's, taunting retort that Sydney was a "professional" and on that account a most desirable acquaintance, and

the subsequent coolness between her mother and herself, which had hurt both of them equally ; her joining the golf club, not because golf was the hall mark of respectable provincialism, but because she saw that on the golf links only could she meet Sydney Hamilton without creating the public scandal that would have been agony to her mother, for she soon realised that going for rides in his side-car was quite out of the question ; just as he did too as soon as he knew that she meant so much to him. She had been quite carried off her feet in those first days. She had lived only for him. She thought only of the things he said to her and those she would say to him, and not the least of her dreams had been the one in which she would convert him to Ireland's cause for justice ; in which she would open his eyes to the real aspect of the cant, the intolerance of the North. But somehow, as she had told Anne Duncan he evaded political discussion for love-making.

Anne's words had had the effect of making her dissect her present feelings and she was now in the blackness of night seeing quite clearly that though she was fond of Sydney all the excited feeling that she had not hitherto stayed to interpret had evaporated. She told herself she was fickle, unstable, where men were concerned, and wondered vaguely what would be the end of it. She shook herself in disgust as a little thought popped its head up

to ask : Had the pleasure Sydney's company gave her been worth the pain she had given her mother ? For people did of course talk a great deal about her affair with him. Had it been worth the petty snubs and rudeness she had experienced from the women, Catholics and Protestants alike of his set, when she met them on the golf links, where they gave her to understand she was entirely out of her sphere, and where she told herself frankly enough she would not have troubled to go were it not for Sydney and his pleading ?

And the Gallaghers ! They had been the biggest thorn in her side all this time. Never did she meet John Gallagher without wondering if he knew, and if so what he thought of her. But neither he nor Seumas ever did anything to make her feel that things were the slightest bit different. She saw them as often as ever, for she never slacked in her enthusiasm for the League and the Ambulance classes. The only difference was that Seumas did not drop in for a chat as often as usual ; the Volunteers took up more and more of his time every day, he said. He had lost a good deal of his boyishness and he had grown older looking, but all that was natural in the strain of the time and the looming on the horizon of civil war. Party and religious feeling had never been so bitter in the memory of any living person. The Protestants no longer smiled at the efforts of the Irish Volunteers. Both sides

were in grim deadly earnest, and black looks and manifestations of hostility replaced blatantly the suavity and sugary sweetness that is the usual coating for the bigotry of the North.

It was very astounding that through it all this intimacy should exist between her and Sydney Hamilton. "It is probably the only one existing between a Catholic and a Protestant in the whole county," she cogitated. "It was made possible only because Sydney was big and broad and—"

Her lamp gave a flicker, a jump and died down quickly. She sprang off her bicycle. It was out, and she stood in total darkness. She fumbled in the saddle bag for a match, but it was useless. The carbide was exhausted. A creeping terror overcame her; standing there in the middle of the road where she had dismounted, she thought she saw shadowy hands emerging from nowhere to grasp her. With a choking sob she jumped on the machine again and slowly made her way forward. She knew that the road was thickly lined with trees on either side as it was the beginning of the dense woods on Lord Clonell's estate. She was still nearly three miles from home, and what was she to do? Blackness above; blackness around; blackness everywhere. It enveloped her in its awful cloak and it seemed as if its great indomitable walls would close in on her to end everything at any moment. She strained her neck and eyes

seeking some glimpse of sky from where she thought the tree tops ended and left a gap above, but in vain. Another sob, this time of hopelessness, broke from her lips as she rode full tilt into something and was thrown heavily against the hedge into which she had ridden. She lay for a time stunned by the fall, but her brain was still active from terror and before she properly knew what she was doing she was moving her limbs carefully to find out if any bones were broken. It was evident that she was still whole for she extracted her legs from the chain and pedals with which they had become hopelessly mixed up, and grasping the damp bushes rose slowly to her feet. Her body was one big ache and her ankle on which she had fallen was causing her excruciating pain. It felt as if it had assumed immense proportions. She touched it gingerly. Yes, it was swelling. Then slowly her position was borne upon her. Here she was, three miles from home, unable to walk and with only the remotest prospect of being discovered that night, for as far as she could guess, it was past nine o'clock and the country folk would have returned from their shopping expeditions long ere this.

Trembling violently she subsided again under the damp hedge and pulled her bicycle up beside her. In spite of the mildness of the April night she was petrified with cold and gradually lapsed into a half-comatose state, but it was a physical

rather than a mental coma and her brain was dancing with the thoughts that she had been thinking a short while back. Seumas and John Gallagher would insist on forcing themselves upon her. At first they only flashed across her mental vision at intervals but by degrees they seemed to oust all else.

Why did they wear that serious look ? what was it they said that made her so impatient with them ? Ah, yes. But that was all so long ago. It had not happened to-day. Of course not. It was the morning she had gone down to Gallagher's, just after the first train had come in, to get the papers. It was the first time they had completely ignored her, though they had seen her come into the shop. She had enquired if anything serious had happened and Seumas had given her the paper and left the shop. The news was startling. A brigadier-general and fifty-seven officers had mutinied at the Curragh, on being informed that they would probably be required to quell a rising in Ulster. What was more they would prefer to fight *for* Ulster than against her. She had laughed heartily. The very effrontery of the thing tickled her. She thought it such a splendid chance for the Government to show them who was ruler once and for all.

Then it was night and John Gallagher was speaking at the Ambulance class. He was telling them that the mutiny had spread to other regi-

ments and that they might be called upon to bind up Ireland's wounds at any moment. Seumas, who stood near her, did not seem to see her ; in his eyes was the same gloomy determination that marked those of his father and the young doctor who came such a long distance to lecture to them. He was saying that they had none to back them up ; the Government was upholding the autocrats and capitalists. It would be a case of fighting for their lives and the little that was theirs. All he said seemed to irritate her, because she still, in spite of all that was happening from day to day, felt that it was only bluff and that men like Sydney Hamilton who were the moving spirits of the thing—though Sydney himself she knew was not one of them—would never consent to active measures. The Gallaghers *did* take life so seriously. She could not see why Seumas should be so altogether absorbed over phantom dangers. And so her poor mind wandered on till it could think no more and then she fainted.

It was the rubbing of a branch against her face that was her first sensation when she began to recover. It was succeeded by a queer premonition that something had happened or was about to happen, but she was too weak to feel frightened any longer. She just lay back with a long shuddering sigh, that was caught in an indrawn breath. What was that sound ? There it was again, the weird

hoot of a motor horn in the distance. After a while, during which her ears were strained to listen, came the low purring of the engine ; then came purring that was irregular and in many different keys. It came nearer. There was more than one car. Yes, distinctly there were two, three—and away in the distance many more.

She looked up, attracted by a gleam of light. They were coming. Fascinated she watched on the slit of sky where the tree tops did not meet, the moving streaks of reflected yellow light. Suddenly she was afraid ; of what she knew not. In a fit of panic she pulled off her mackintosh, crying with pain as she raised herself slightly to draw it from under her, and feeling for her bicycle covered it completely. Leaning back as far as possible she pulled the projecting twigs around her and waited.

Round the bend came the humming vehicles. She watched them approach, her body stiff and tense. There were no glaring head lights as she had feared ; they were muffled and only shed enough light to show the man at the wheel where the road ended and the hedge began. Snake-like they approached and glided past, one after another, silent and sinister to the girl's over-wrought imagination. There were no tail lights, nothing to tell that they had come and gone but the hum that now seemed part of the night.

She was past wondering whither they were bound, and what was the mission of the owners of the shadowy figures within. The queer drowsy feeling was again stealing over her when the humming in the distance was repeated, but this time she did not hear it ; she had fallen on her back in the grassy ditch, and the mackintosh that covered the bicycle was dragged with her. Round the bend appeared another yellow light, somewhat brighter than those others, and along the road panted a powerful motor-bicycle with side-car attached. As it approached the rays from its lamp struck the steel rims and handle-bars on Dympna's machine and the glint must have caught the rider's eye, for no sooner had he passed than he slowed down and stopped. He dismounted and taking off his lamp made his way back peering into the hedge as he came. A moment later the light revealed to Sydney Hamilton the prostrate form and the still white face surmounted by a damp tangled mass of hair.

"Dympna!" he exclaimed in horrified tones, but there was no answer. He put the lamp on the ground and kneeling down beside her raised her into a sitting posture, and holding one cold hand against his lips breathed upon it wondering the while what he was going to do as he had nothing in the way of a restorative with him. Finally he propped her up against a hedge and rubbed her

hands till the warm blood came back into them, and then quite suddenly she opened her eyes. She had not really been unconscious, only in a kind of stupor from the cold and pain.

"That's better," he muttered with satisfaction, but after a vague look at him she closed them again.

"Oh, dear, this won't do," he added in haste. "Dympna, Dympna, do you hear me? You must try and keep awake."

"I'm so sleepy," she replied in a faltering voice.

"But you can't sleep on the roadside all night. I must take you home and you must try to stand up. How long have you been here?"

This brought her back to consciousness of what had happened. "How long have I been here," she repeated with difficulty. "Oh, a very long time. You see my lamp went out and I fell and hurt my ankle and I can't walk," she ended piteously.

"Poor little girl. Well we must try to get you home; it's after one o'clock; your people will be very anxious about you."

"No, mother didn't know I was to come to-night. Past one, that is very late," she remarked sleepily.

"Now let me lift you; I won't hurt your foot." He lifted her bodily and carried her towards his bicycle. When he reached it he stopped dead.

In his consternation at finding Dympna thus, he had forgotten !

" I'm afraid I'll have to put you down again for a moment, Dympna, just to clear out the side-car. I have some—things in it," he said at last.

" I can stand on one foot and hold on to the bicycle if you let me down."

His voice was somewhat nervous as he answered. " I think you would be better by the hedge."

" No, no," she returned with childish petulance. " I don't want ever to go near a hedge again. I'll stand here."

There was nothing for it but to comply with her wishes. He lowered her gently till she stood on the sound foot with one hand clutching the saddle of the bicycle. Then as he moved away from her she forgot and rested the swollen foot on the ground. With a gasp of pain she threw out her other hand to support herself and it caught something that was cold and hard and smooth, the contact with which acted on her like a douche of cold water. Sydney Hamilton had gone back for the lamp and now he returned hooking it on to its place in front, but it threw light enough behind for the girl to see that the object she had touched was one of a number of rifle-barrels which projected from under the cover of the side-car. She gazed at them in a dazed sort of way, and at Sydney as he stripped off the cover and laying it on the ground proceeded

to remove from the car on to it the fire-arms, a couple of dozen or so in number. Then came some packets which it took a good deal of effort to extract. He dragged the cover and its contents across the road and out of sight under the hedge. It was all too much for the exhausted girl to understand and she gave a little tired sigh as he lifted her into the car.

"I will come back for your bicycle before morning," he remarked awkwardly, as he drew on his gloves and took his place beside her. Then bending down till his face touched hers, he asked softly, "Dympna, sweetheart, are you very angry with me?"

"Angry, Sydney! Why should I be angry? You are bringing me home," she answered in tired surprise.

He did not speak again and twenty minutes later he had roused Mrs. Donnelly by flinging pebbles at the window indicated by Dympna, and explaining how he had found her, delivered her daughter into her charge.

## CHAPTER X

THE May sunshine poured in through the lace curtains of the sitting-room window. It seemed to take a special delight in seeking the threadbare places on the carpet, and the worn edges of the chairs and dancing them into shameless relief. But even its clear bright rays could not take the air of homely comfort from the room nor render less apparent the sense of the fitness of things displayed in its ornaments and decoration. The sun completely ignored, however, the place where Dymphna's sofa was drawn up beside the fire. Was it because he was insulted at the existence of a heat apart from his own on this soft spring morning ; or was it that the gloom on the face and the storm in the eyes of this daughter of men frightened him away ?

Dymphna lay moodily gazing out into the street where the neighbours' dogs and her own Jip and Twig were taking their morning exercise in the form of a scrimmage, which as it wended its various courses up and down, across and back, somewhat impeded the progress of pedestrians. Her face was of unwonted pallor and there were rings under

the eyes that reached almost to the cheek-bones, and her lips were set and hard. Yet never had that peculiar charm, that made one look and look, and look again to find wherein it lay, been so strong as to-day. All week she had been silent and brooding, and though her mother guessed the cause she said nothing, hoping that when her foot was well enough to permit of her being assisted downstairs the girl might recover her spirits. But the blow had been too heavy to allow of a hasty recovery.

Dympna had slept the sleep of complete exhaustion for twenty-four hours after Sydney Hamilton had brought her home in the dark hours of that eventful morning. When she awoke Clonell was ringing from end to end with the news of the Larne gun-running. While she was still rubbing the sleep from her eyes and becoming conscious of the pain of her ankle, which the doctor had bandaged as she slept, her mother was pouring out the tale of how forty thousand German Mauser rifles and hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition were landed the previous evening at various points along the Antrim and Down coasts, by the Ulster Volunteers. It seemed that within a couple of hours of the landing, the arms had been distributed all over the North by motor lorries, cars, and bicycles lent by patriotic Orangemen for the occasion. The accommodating police and coastguard forces in the vicinity had allowed themselves to be

peaceably surrounded, while the alarm did not reach Belfast, a few miles away, till it was too late to do anything. The saying that applies to so many things that happen in Ireland Mrs. Donnelly applied to the gun-running too, "If the docility of the representatives of law and order weren't so serious it would be funny."

As the girl had listened the sleep was chased like magic from her eyes by a vision of a dark road, and muffled yellow lights emerging from the blackness. Again she stood dazed in the middle of that same road and touched the cold, gleaming barrel of a rifle. Yes, it had been a rifle. She had only dimly realised it then, and she had not wondered that it should be there. Now she knew. *Sydney Hamilton had been bringing to Clonell rifles and ammunition with which to shoot down his Catholic fellow-countrymen.* The countrymen on whose poverty his father and others of his kind and the kind above him had built up their businesses and amassed fortunes. And this was the man with whom not many months ago she thought herself in love, who up to this very day had possessed her close friendship. She would have staked her life on his being too big and broad to seriously wish to bar the progress of the nation of which he too was a child, for the sake of a greedy minority, who had lived on the fat of the land when the majority were practically starving, and who now feared that

they might have to share with that less fortunate majority. And she had hoped to show him the justice and fairness of the other side !

A harsh laugh was all the comment the exciting news had drawn from her, a laugh which Mrs. Donnelly had never before heard, but which she was to hear often in the ensuing week. It had been inspired by the recalling of Anne Duncan's words : "What's bred in the bone will out in the flesh." They had come true with a vengeance, and the girl's faith in mankind was shaken for many months to come.

She looked up now and smiled wanly as her mother entered. She had bitterly regretted the words between them that had been caused by her friendship with Sydney Hamilton. He had not been worth it, she told herself over and over, and without saying so in words, she managed to convey to her mother her disgust at her own doings in the past.

"Aren't you tired of reading, Mavourneen ?" Mrs. Donnelly asked, tucking the rug round Dympna's feet. "Would you like me to send for some one to keep you company ?"

"I don't know who you can send for, mum. Seumas Gallagher is in Dublin and I don't know that I want anybody else." She said this in a tone so simple and unstudied that even the most ill-disposed could scarcely misconstrue it into any-

thing warmer than friendship. It was just that she had seen so little of Seumas of late, and she felt he could tell her many things she suddenly wanted to know. Then in a tone of deadly calm as a step resounded on the pavement outside and a shadow darkened the window, "There's Sydney Hamilton, mum ; I fancy I heard him go into the shop. He may come in," she said pointedly, as her mother hurried out of the room a satisfied smile curving her lips. She no longer feared for Dympna's young affections ; instead, she would not for a million have stood in Sydney's shoes at that moment. During the past week there had come that into her daughter's face which inspired in her mother something very like awe.

Except to bring Dympna's bicycle and mackintosh the morning after her accident Sydney had only been once to enquire for her, and Mrs. Donnelly guessed how difficult that call had been for him ; she also realised that it was forced by his genuine feeling for the girl and perhaps it was a tiny twinge of sympathy for him that made her very gracious as she ushered him in and stood chatting for a few minutes till the call of the small shop-boy, which dogged her movements at all times, floated in through the half-open door. "You're awantin' in the shop, Mrs. Donnelly."

When she had gone there was an awkward silence. During it Sydney Hamilton found it

impossible to remove his eyes from the tragic white face before him. Dympna had not looked at him once since he entered, and she was still gazing inscrutably into the street without. He had not anticipated this reception and he was to say the least of it perturbed. True, he had expected a slight awkwardness between them; but he did not think it probable that she would allude definitely to his mission on the night of the gun-running. He had wanted to let it blow over before seeing her, but the yearning for her had been too strong and he had thrown caution to the winds and risked all the talk that would certainly be caused by his third visit to the house in such a short time.

He was beginning to feel slightly uncomfortable and was cogitating as to how to set the ball rolling in the right direction when she turned a cold questioning gaze to his.

“ Well ! What have you to say for yourself ? ”  
The demand was as cold as her eyes.

He was completely nonplussed. “ Say ? What do you want me to say ? ” he replied, and the surprise in his voice was repeated in his expression.

A glint of astonishment flitted across his companion’s face but quickly disappeared as she said curtly, “ You don’t for a moment suppose that things are to go on between us as hitherto, that we are still friends, do you ? ”

“ I can’t pretend to misunderstand you, but

why should these beastly political differences come between us, Dympna ? ”

“ You call them political differences,” she laughed harshly. “ Did you feel so mild about it when you were helping to land your—was it forty thousand—modern rifles and your cartloads of ammunition ? ’ Fraid if you did, you’ll not be much use when it comes to shooting down my friends and relatives.”

He flushed angrily. “ You put it crudely.”

“ I feel crude,” she retorted. “ Your coming here is an insult. What did you take me for, if you thought I would continue as your friend ? A traitor to Ireland ; a soulless, characterless will-o'-the-wisp ? Good God ! to think that I let you kiss me ; that I thought you were capable of seeing things in another light, and all the time you were laughing up your sleeve at the simplicity of papists in general.” Her voice cut as a lash and the man’s face changed from anger to pain. It was less cutting as she continued in a lower voice. “ One expects such a lot from people who have had the advantages of a University career and a life that ought to give wideness of outlook. You see I expected all that from you, or I should not have hesitated to cut short our acquaintance after the Vincent de Paul dance. Then the gulf between us was impassable, but I thought I could make it passable ; now I see it was a chasm. I suppose I

am wrong in blaming you ; it was all my own blindness and my silly schoolgirl sentimentality. Why don't you go ? I've said too much already," she concluded wearily.

" I don't know why I don't go ; I wouldn't have stood half of all you have said from anybody else. I—I suppose it's because I'm in love with you," he responded dully.

Few girls can be hard on a man who makes such a confession and some of the hardness left Dympna's eyes. " You'll soon forget me when we have broken once and for all."

She let her eyes rest for a moment on the fair head that she liked so much ; they passed to the blue eyes and straight clean features and back again to the eyes as if in farewell. She felt sorry to lose him, but there was no relaxing in her determination to break with him. In her heart she was still desperately angry with him, desperately disappointed in him.

He grasped that she meant what she said ; already he felt her slipping from him, and he wanted her more than ever. She was so different from the other women he had known ; so earnest, so full of purpose, yet so full of fun and youth and life. Inwardly he was cursing the fate that brought them into the world in a land where the crossing of the drawn line only leads to disaster.

He bent down and lifted a limp, unresponsive

hand. "Dympna, sweetheart, don't let this come between us ; I can't let you go ; and what's more, I won't. For you do care for me a little, don't you, dear ? "

"No. Any regard I had for you was killed dead a week ago. I am afraid I am one of those people whose ideals are more to them than love, more than anything else in the world. I have learnt many things in the past week and that is one of them."

He looked incredulous. "But this business will never come to anything," he persisted. "It will blow over."

"Do your leaders think so ? "

"Well of course they are prepared to fight, but what I mean is that the Government won't let it go so far."

"You mean ? "

"That they will abandon Home Rule rather than risk the dangers of civil war."

The girl's voice was very soft, but there was a strange glitter in the eyes that she kept fixed on the floor. "Why do you think they will give in to the minority at the expense of the majority ? "

"You see we are so very powerful. We have the whole of the governing classes in England at our back—and we have Germany."

"And a good many of them have been the governing class in India," she remarked meditatively.

He did not see the point in this remark. Sydney Hamilton like the majority of his class knew only the India of Hill Stations and Government House balls and polo, culled from the pages of popular novels portraying *Anglo-Indian* life. Dympna's education had been on different lines. To her India was another Poland, another Ireland. Yet, perhaps one could hardly call it education that had made her outlook different. It was the whole mental and temperamental difference between the Celtic nationalist, and the descendant of the Puritan settler, modernised, but with the narrowness of outlook and solidity, diluted in the descent it is true, but nevertheless there to be stirred into activity on provocation. And Sydney Hamilton, the educated, ostentatiously well-informed young solicitor was typical of the average Northern Unionist, to whom many a nationalist with only an elementary school education could have given points on international law and affairs. The people who are now Unionists have lived since their settlement in Ireland in the calm and peace of prosperity and good living ; they have none of the natural quickness and brilliancy of the Celt whose aptitude for grasping and retaining knowledge is unlimited ; and fat living does not tend to sharpen the wits ; moreover neither does it tend to stimulate interest in the domestic affairs of other peoples. On the other hand the Celt has for

centuries been fighting for his life and having succeeded in keeping the breath in his body he has to depend on his wits to feed it. But all the time he is writhing under the necessity of living on his wits ; he is all the time discontented with his lot and fighting to improve it. As among the poor one finds the greatest generosity, the biggest sympathies for the hardships of others, so he too has a big heart, and his sympathies go out to others in a like state. He is interested in their struggles and progress and likes to compare them with his own. He is also interested in those who are living as he would wish to live. He is eager to learn about all countries and all men and his great and overwhelming characteristic is that he never accepts a statement without proof. He has been done so often that he has developed into a true Thomas. And this scepticism stands him well, for it helps him to sort out the knowledge that counts, and it makes him the greatest internationalist in the world.

And so it was that when Dympna Donnelly mentioned India she was thinking of the great silent, coloured masses of the governed, and to her companion it suggested the pleasure-loving minority who govern.

After pondering for a few minutes he realised that she was waiting for him to speak. "Yes, many of them have seen service in India," he

responded, an unconscious note of satisfaction in his voice.

Dympna's eyes were still averted. "And the majority? Can you yourself not see that Ireland would be the better for managing her own affairs?"

"I'm afraid I cannot. Is not English rule the best in the world?"

"For English people perhaps, but not for Irish. Did not English rule destroy our whole commercial and national life; our woollen, our glass and every industry we ever had?"

"Yes, but we have the linen; England encouraged that and made it what it is. You can't expect her to encourage other industries that would injure her own trade. The governing class are interested in all the big commercial concerns."

"Ah!" there was a world of meaning in that ejaculation. "Then you *do* understand. To put it plainly, you Orangemen, with your smug linen trade—into which a nationalist wouldn't be allowed for all the gold in the country—don't give a jot for Ireland; you don't want commercial freedom or any other freedom because of this smug prosperity. Of course you sympathise with English capitalists. Of course you'll fight for them. You've a jolly good thing and you're not going to hand over some to us without a desperate struggle. And you bring God into your dirty bit of grasping commercialism—your precious leaders with their

Bible quotations and hypocritical cant. Well ! I'm only an atom, but I swear now before you that I'll give every bit of my life to *our* cause—the cause that's going to bring the people who ought to be ruling into their own. We will come into it, in your day, and if I had *my* way when that time comes I'd see every root and branch of you suffer for the trouble you are bringing on the country now, when for the first time in history we are to receive justice. But I won't see that. We are too easy going. We won't stick together ; we will let you have more than your share of the good things going, and we'll believe in you, as I, a silly school girl, believed in one of you, and am now facing the stark-naked unblushing thing that Orangeism or Unionism, or whatever you like to call it, is. The men among you who stand out against it are of the salt of the earth. I see now what the Tones and the Currans and their followers of to-day have had to escape before emerging."

Under the quick hot deluge of words and the gaze of blazing eyes, Sydney Hamilton stood dumb, anger and admiration for her daring cheek fighting for the upper hand. "After all she is only a girl," he told himself, "and what does it matter what she says or thinks ? As she herself admits she is but an atom." So with a hint of playful superiority he exclaimed, "Well I never !" As soon as he said it he would have given much to recall it. In

the atmosphere, tragic, emotional, above all of deep conflict that Dympna had created in pouring out that torrent of feeling, his words seemed hopelessly inadequate, appallingly ill placed. He saw the scornful curve of her lips. Had she expected him to defend himself ! Well he was jolly sure he wasn't going to bandy words any longer with her in this wild unreasonable mood. He lifted his soft hat and held out his hand.

" There is no use arguing about it, Dympna ; you've got your ideas and I've got mine and we are not going to do either side any good by fighting when neither of us means to be convinced by the other. To change the subject, how is the foot ? Still painful ? "

" It is almost better, thanks," she replied coldly.

" You must hurry up and get out for a game of golf. I haven't gone on the links since the last day we were there together."

She made an impatient gesture. " Have I not made it clearly understood that this is good-bye ? "

If for a moment he had felt that she was slipping from him he had again reassured himself and attributed her excited state to her indisposition. Now doubts again assailed him.

" You are not well now, Dympna, and you are magnifying things out of all proportion. Let us put off saying good-bye till another day."

" I am perfectly cool and collected, I assure you. I have known for the past week that we must cease to be friends." She said it coldly, without the slightest trace of emotion.

A tinge of fear crept into his eyes. " You—you are serious then ? "

She shrugged her shoulders in a manner that showed she considered further protestations on her part superfluous.

" You don't care then ? "

" I said no ; did you not understand me ? I said you yourself had killed any feelings I had for you."

" I didn't think you meant it," he answered in a dazed way. He was trying to realise that this was the last time he would be near her ; the last time they would talk together ; the last time he would have the right to call her by her name. And they might live in the same town all their lives, yet he would be as far from her as if he were at the other end of the earth. He would not even meet her at other houses, for she belonged to the twopence-halfpenny set and he to the threepenny. " And—God above ! he might have to stand by and see her marry another man." A vision of the brilliant young leader of the Clonell Irish Volunteers sprang up before him, he knew not why, and drove him to desperation. He grasped her shoulder so that she gave a little cry of pain.

" You can't drop me like this," he said hoarsely. " You encouraged me ; you made me think you cared for me. I've never thought twice about any woman but you, and you—fling me off for a mere whim. Dympna darling, I'd give everything in the world to possess you——"

" Even to becoming a Home Ruler ? "

There was silence ; the man's lips were twitching painfully, and his hand covered his eyes.

Dympna's voice was very gentle and she put up her hand to touch his, but withdrew it again before he had seen the movement.

" I have been horrid, Sydney. Try to forgive me, but to me Ireland is more than my life—it comes next to God. I like you so, so much ; I am terribly hurt that this has happened between us, but it was entirely my fault for letting things go so far. I did care for you at first, really and truly, but it seemed to die away after a time. I don't think there is any such thing as love. It always dies away like that. You'll forget me soon ; there are so many nice Protestant girls to go with."

Sydney removed his hand and looked at her curiously. " Why do you think there is no such thing as love ? "

She blushed and feeling it was due to him confessed. " Well up to the night I met you I thought I was irrevocably in love with somebody else, and that died away immediately I met you."

Before he knew it the name sprang to his lips.  
“ Seumas Gallagher ? ”

“ Yes, Seumas. Wasn’t it queer ? ”

He sighed heavily and stood up once more. If it had been any other but the one man in whom he recognised all the qualities that the girl demanded !

“ Good-bye, dear. I will always hope that we may again become friends when this accursed fight comes to an end. I want you to know that there never can be anybody else but you, and take it from me that there *is* such a thing as love and nobody wishes more than I do at this moment that there *wasn’t*.”

She gulped down a sob ; he was behaving so splendidly after all her rudeness in her own house, and she felt so thoroughly ashamed.

“ Good-bye, Sydney,” she faltered, and he was gone.

## CHAPTER XI

ON the evening of her encounter with Sydney Hamilton, Dympna received a letter from the favourite teacher of her schooldays, Sister Columba. One of the hundreds of Irishwomen, with brilliant University careers behind them, who enter convents in Ireland and all over the world, Columba was surely one of the most brilliant—a woman with the head of a lawyer and the soul of a poet-saint. Truly, it is the work and prayers of women like her that render the Ireland of to-day a land akin to the Island of Saints and Scholars of over a thousand years ago.

She had quickly discerned the latent qualities in the little commonplace, awkward girl who had come under her charge six years before ; the girl who after the first stage of homesickness had passed had proceeded to upset the school to the best of her ability scarce a week after her arrival by chasing her class-mates and a timid young novice round the house with a dead mouse, which she grasped fearlessly by the tail. Coming into her life at the most impressionable period, Sister Columba was to a great extent responsible for the

Dympna who had worried her mother by her intense nationalism, and aroused the interest of the men who were to play such a vital part in her life—John and Seumas Gallagher; though the germ had been laid far back on that 15th of August in 1908 when she had escaped death through the wit of the boy of seventeen to whose creed she then swore allegiance. Little could the nun guess what influence her written words were to have on the girl, now that she had left her care. The letter ran :

*“ Child, I hope you are praying for Ireland. Though scarce two months elapse between now and the examinations the girls are not studying as usual. They are frightened of what may happen between now and then. Dympna, we are the victims of unscrupulous politicians; everything seems against us; if we lose, Ireland loses her soul. All these years I have watched the last of the old customs, music and ideals slipping, slipping away, first from the educated and then from those who ape them. We are rapidly losing our identity in the fashions, customs and music, and above all the language of other countries. It will soon be gone altogether, if national feeling is not aroused to a pitch far beyond that to which this crisis is now arousing it. Our apathy is the natural reaction that is the result of a time of peace after centuries of struggle, and if we do not come out of it we can*

*never adequately demand our rights from the democracy of the world. Our one great weapon is prayer. The children here have made a special offering to God of all the prayers and works and sufferings of their lives, to plead that all may come right for Ireland. It was their own idea. Is it not a beautiful one? I am sure you will join with them."*

Dympna read this paragraph over and over again till she knew every word of it off by heart. It was her custom to give Sister Columba's letters to her mother to read, but this one she withheld; why, she knew not. That night it was under her pillow while she slept and for many nights afterwards. It had formulated the germ of an idea, of which she as yet dared not let herself think; and it was easy to banish immature thoughts just now that she had so much to think about in the events of the past few weeks.

Any feeling warmer than friendship that might have lingered in her heart for Sydney Hamilton was indeed dead, for he ceased altogether to take a prominent place in her thoughts now that she seldom saw him. If he had hoped to arouse her pique by avoiding her as she had ordered, he was mistaken. She was merely grateful to him for acquiescing. When she did happen to think of him she was sorry to lose his companionship as she had

practically no friends among the young people in Clonell except Seumas Gallagher. Because of her friendship with Sydney, about whose Volunteer movements they knew more than she did, the Catholic boys, though friendly enough, did not pay her the attention that they had paid her before she met him. The women she had neglected. In Clonell people did not make formal calls—except among the smart set who had visiting cards and liked to use them, and from this of course the shop-keeper's daughter was excluded—but just dropped in and out of one another's houses almost daily. And Dympna, with her golf in the afternoon and ambulance classes and Gaelic League in the evenings never seemed to have time to become on intimate terms with them.

As she had told Anne Duncan she had known for some time her powers over Sydney, and though she boasted of them then, all the time she was judging his love by her own short-lived, but nevertheless extremely poignant attacks of that disease, attacks which her emotional nature and lively imagination had rendered very real for the time. But she was quite sure that once away from her influence Sydney would promptly recover, and this conviction stemmed the remorse she would otherwise have felt on witnessing his apparent suffering on his rejection. Her regret at losing him, everything, was overshadowed by her discovery that

underneath all his careless, easy, man-of-the-wide-world manner and speech, he was of the mould of the North ; in spite of being fairly well read, in spite of his education, he had the "bred-in-the-bone" old hatred for Catholicism and for the Catholics who were Nationalists ; and he opposed them not on principle, but purely because they were Catholics and Nationalists who ought to be kept down and if possible stamped out. He had brought home to her with greater force than any words of John Gallagher's, whom she looked upon as the greatest man she knew, could ever have done, that there was no blending of Orange and Green.

She felt, as she had called herself in a moment of excitement, an atom, a straw that was trying to go against the tide. As the days passed this feeling of helplessness almost drove her mad. The Government had done nothing about the gun-running, and now, little more than a month afterwards, the Ulster leader was boasting that he was going to bring in more Mausers. Strong men were now organising and drilling every moment in the day to save their country from ruin and devastation, but what could they do ? They had practically no arms or ammunition, and compared to the wealth of England and Ulster which was financing the Orangemen, absolutely no money. And what could she, a bit of a girl of nineteen, do ? The enforced inaction was terrible to one of her eager

energetic temperament, and the desire to be doing seemed to be wearing her very life away.

Then the tension broke. The seed that had been sown by Sister Columba's letter, and which had been forcing its way up, up, up, day by day, became a full-blown flower—a flower of sacrifice.

She had known for some time it was inevitable and now she did not shrink from it. Rather she gloried in it. Of her own accord she could do nothing now for the Roisin dhu who had given her birth ; things had gone past human aid and God alone could help. She would add her pleading to that of the young girls who were offering Him their prayers and works and actions that their fair land might be saved from this terrible impending tragedy. But her pleading would be her life. She would offer her life to Him that Ireland might be saved.

It was on an evening in the beginning of June that Dympna broke the tidings to her mother. Outside it was raining heavily. In the little sitting-room all was dismal. It had been too warm during the day to light the fire and now the empty grate, black and dark, gave the room a chill, forlorn look. The rain pattered against the window and splashed on the sill outside in sharp monotonous regularity. The girl sat with her elbows on the table, her eyes

fixed nervously on the silver and brown head that was visible above the top of the evening paper. She spoke suddenly, with a quick indrawn breath.

"Mother—I want to be a nun."

The paper slipped to the floor with a rustle, and Mrs. Donnelly regarded her daughter with distended eyes. There was no mistaking the seriousness of the quick nervous words. She spoke at last, and her hands were grasping tightly the arms of the chair as if thus she sought to keep her emotions in check.

"Since when have you had this idea?"

"For over a month I have been quite decided about it."

It was evident that the elder woman was exercising over herself an iron restraint. "What has put this notion into your head, Dympna? Has it anything to do with your difference with Sydney Hamilton?"

"I—I don't know. My disappointment in him, perhaps, has brought the turning-point in my life sooner than it might have come otherwise. I realise fully, however, that this must have come—sooner or later. I am glad it has come sooner—it makes it easier."

"Then you *are* in love with Sydney Hamilton and you wish to bury yourself in a convent because you have lost him—though that was your doing, I presume, not his?"

"I am not in love with Sydney—not in the least little bit."

"Then surely you must know that this whim, or fancy for a religious life is no sign of a vocation, and that no convent would accept you without a very strong and sure vocation. This may last and it may not, but you must test your vocation by waiting at least a year before taking any steps to enter a convent. I insist upon that. Then, if I see that you are still of the same mind and it is God's will that He shall take you, I shall put nothing in the way of your entering. Till then I would rather you would not allude to the subject again."

The tone in which these words were said was kind if somewhat forced, but it was final. Mrs. Donnelly, after the first shock, took her daughter's disclosure as the advent of the period that comes some time in the life of most girls brought up in a convent when the attraction towards the religious life is greatest. It is always a healthy attraction and it never lasts long, for the basis of a real vocation is seldom attraction. Dymphna herself realised that if she had felt she had what Catholic girls understand as a vocation—a conviction that God wanted her to serve Him as a nun, she would have hesitated in making a decision in haste. But in her case there was no such conviction ; she knew a vocation had not come to her in the ordinary way ;

she had counted the cost of what she was doing ; realised that unhappiness, perhaps misery were in store for her, because she lacked a vocation for a life that for those who are called is the happiest on earth. She knew that months, nay years would not shake that decision and she wondered how she could ever convince her mother of that fact without disclosing her real motives.

" I must allude to it, mother," she said desperately. " I want to go at once, on the 29th of this month. I wanted to go to the Carmelites, but I must think of you. I cannot go to a place where you could never see me or from which I could not come to you if you were ill—so I have decided on the Sisters of Charity. Their life is as hard in a way as that of the Carmelites," she continued hurriedly.

The mother's face had become drawn and old-looking.

" You must not talk like this, Dympna. You do not know your own mind. You are too young —only nineteen."

" But, mother, most nuns enter before they are twenty, and some at seventeen and eighteen. Look at Jane and Tessie," mentioning her two class-mates who were now nuns.

" Sister Columba ! Has she anything to do with this ? " the mother asked suddenly.

" Sister Columba will say all the things you have

said when she hears. She knows nothing, absolutely nothing, about it," she answered evasively, and the elder woman was too distraught to notice the indirectness of the reply. Dympna knew in her heart that nobody would regret more, if she knew it, than Sister Columba the effect of those few innocent lines at the end of her letter, but the fact that nobody would approve of her decision knowing its real incentive, did not shake her determination an inch. This determination was fast changing into something like obstinacy and the air was charged with it. It was borne on the woman whose grip on the chair arms had not relaxed, and it gave her strength to make a final effort to retain her authority.

"I can rely on your judgment and common-sense in many things, Dympna, but on this one point I claim, as your mother, to exercise my experience and the moderation of age——"

"No, no—you are not old, Mum, you are not forty," she interrupted hotly.

Unheeding, the elder woman continued. "There is something behind this hasty, headlong decision and I want you to tell me what it is. It is my right to know it, if I am to give you up. Won't you tell me, darling?" She came round to where the girl sat laying her cheek against the ruddy head. Hot tears sprang to Dympna's eyes and rolled down her cheeks. How desperately she wanted

to tell her mother all ; to share with her the hopes and fears of the past and the calm joy of the future sacrifice ; to beg her to undertake for Ireland the little that she, Dympna, might have done had she remained in the world. But she knew what the result would be. Her mother would refuse to understand ; she would tell others, John Gallagher, perhaps, and Anne Duncan and Father Mullen, and they would succeed in keeping her at home, she knew. All this passed rapidly through her mind while her mother's cheek rested lightly on her hair, her beautiful hair, of which she was so proud and which would soon be gone for ever, and she only sobbed in a pitiful voice that went to the mother's heart. "I want to give my life to God, to give up everything for Him."

There was a choking sound and Dympna was alone in the room. With the splendid selfishness of youth she did not see that she had made one life blank of all light ; dragged from it everything that made existence worth while ; killed with one blow the first romance of her mother's life.

## **PART II**



## CHAPTER XII

ANNE DUNCAN paused at a turning on the Clontarf Road and looking towards the sea drew in a long breath. It was nearly a year since she had smelt that delicious, pungent, sea-weedy smell, that lingers about one's senses long after one is borne away from the delights of a seaside holiday. There it shimmered in the noonday sun, that great wide expanse of dancing, teasing, laughing bay, reined in from the tram-line and the houses on the opposite side of the road only by a low wall. Here and there small sailing vessels and row-boats were anchored on its swaying surface, bobbing up and down so that she almost fancied she could hear the slop, slop of their curved breasts as they struck the water. And away in the background the misty, sun-kissed mountains, with haloes of silver hovering as of angel's breath where their grey faded into the light of the sky.

The clank of a tram coming citywards roused her from the beauty of the scene before her and she turned into the by-road, opposite which she had been standing. "Am I really only ten minutes' ride from the Pillar?" she reflected, taking a last

look, then resuming her walk. "Surely Dublin is the fairest city in the world," ran her thoughts, and for once there was no regret when the Venice and the Paris and the Rome she had seen only in pictures sprang up for compare.

After a few minutes' walk she passed through massive iron gates set in a high stone wall and made her way up a short avenue bordered with shrubs, to an opening, where in the centre of a smooth green lawn stood a solid, substantially-built stone residence, of equally substantial dimensions. Nowhere were curtains to be seen and if there were blinds they were invisible to the eye of the outsider. But there was no doubt that the house was inhabited, for the beds of brilliant tulips and spring flowers showed signs of loving care; and the whitened steps that led to the massive door and the shining knocker were irre-proachable.

Mrs. Duncan knocked and the sound echoed through the house, as if it were empty, or but sparsely furnished. The door swung open and a smiling pink-cheeked nun, in the white veil of a novice, appeared.

"Can I see Sister Dymphna?" Anne enquired.

"Sister Dymphna," repeated the nun blankly. Then smiling quickly, "Oh! you mean Sister Imelda. But come in."

The little nun led the way to the reception-

room, chatting the while. "It is so long since her name was Sister Dympna that I had almost forgotten it. She has been Sister Imelda for over a year now."

"I haven't seen her since her reception, and though I knew she received her new name then, I always think of her as Dympna."

"Of course," agreed the sister, "but I must go and tell Rev. Mother you are here. She expects you. In the ordinary way we are not allowed to see visitors during Lent, but as this is the last day she told me this morning that Sister Imelda might see you. Now I will leave you."

At that moment the Angelus bell rang and the nun halted on her way to the door and blessing herself began quite simply to say aloud that prayer. Quite simply too Anne Duncan answered the responses, and then the nun went on her way.

How still the place was ! There were sounds, true, the opening and closing of doors ; the tread of soft footsteps above ; the rustle of skirts and the tinkle of beads and keys as the sisters passed through the hall outside ; but they did not take away from that odd, peaceful stillness that brought back vividly Anne's school-days ; they only emphasised it. She gazed round the room—the typical convent reception-room with its rows of carved high-backed chairs ; its polished floor, with

scattered here and there a few cheap but tasteful rugs ; its heavy oil paintings, one of the foundress of the Sisters of Charity, the others sacred pictures ; the photographs on the marble mantelpiece, in their thick gilt frames, probably the gift of some patron, and the inevitable plant in the centre of the table, on which lay bound copies of the " Irish Rosary " and other magazines.

She did not hear the door open. She started as it closed and a tall, magnificently-built woman came towards her with hand outstretched. "A woman born to rule," was the thought that crossed Anne's mind as she watched with a certain fascination the quick, energetic yet dignified movements, and the graceful carriage of the nun.

" Forgive me for having kept you waiting, Mrs. Duncan. But a nun's time is never her own."

" Even a Mother Superior's ! " laughed Anne.

" I think the poor Mother Superior is the most ill-used person in the community ; the other nuns have their special duties to perform and there their responsibility ends, but the Reverend Mother is at everybody's beck and call. Even when I slip into the chapel to say a few prayers I am wanted on the telephone or in the community room or across at the hospital," the nun responded laughingly.

" I know that only too well, Mother," said Anne.

" But you did not come to talk about my duties.

You will wonder why I wanted to see you before sending Sister Imelda to you. I tell you frankly, Mrs. Duncan, I am worried about her."

"She is not keeping strong?"

"Oh, she is robust enough, and a splendid addition to our hospital staff. Indeed, she has given both the Mother of Novices and myself satisfaction in every way. But there is a difference between her and her fellow novices that of late has become, to my eyes, somewhat marked. They are gay as children during their free time; they play as they work, whole-heartedly. Imelda is no older than most of them, younger indeed than some, yet she is not a child. Play—an hour's recreation seems to have no attraction for her. At first it was not like that; she was, outwardly at least, one of them. And yet, she is so perfect in every way. I am sure if one of the Mothers told her to jump out of the window she would obey as promptly and calmly as she goes about everything she does. Now little Sister Paul who opened the door for you would not. She would consider the Mother had gone out of her mind and come to me. You will think me absurd perhaps in questioning an attitude which seems that of an ideal nun, but I am truly troubled about her and you see I cannot explain why. I fear that she is suffering and both the Mother of Novices and myself are beginning to wonder if her reception was not a

mistake ; if she has a vocation at all ! Our noviciate is so terribly hard at the beginning that if a postulant can stand it till her reception we can be almost sure of her vocation, but occasionally it takes a couple of years to find out that a girl has no vocation. It makes it harder, too, when they try to persuade themselves that they have, through a wish to remain or the fear of being considered a spoiled nun, though I think that attitude is dying out now. I know you are her mother's best friend and as I did not want to worry her, I thought you would tell me what you really think when you have seen her."

There was a little furrow on Anne Duncan's brow when the nun had finished speaking.

" Thank you for telling me this, Mother. I too will speak frankly to you. As I suppose her mother told you, Dympna's sudden desire to become a nun absolutely took away the breath of everybody who knew her. Although I was her friend, she would tell me nothing—nothing. I feared it was disappointment over a love affair, but she denied that quite emphatically, and I believed her. I did everything I could do to dissuade her from coming here, at least for a time, because I felt that she would do more good in the world than in a convent. We need those determined, progressive, fighting girls so much in these queer times. It was all no use. The only information any of us could extract

from her was, that she wanted to give up everything for God. We could not very well stand out against that, so she had her way. And now you think she is not happy ? She was so happy, in an exalted, other-world way, the last time I was here, just before her reception, that I quite decided she had fulfilled her destiny."

"I don't know ; perhaps it will come all right ; I hope so. We should not like to lose her now."

"It might come to that—if she has no vocation ?" Anne Duncan asked breathlessly, eagerly.

"If we finally decided that she had no vocation, yes, she must go ; otherwise it would mean a life of misery for her. But I must send her to you. You will stay to lunch of course and before you go I will see you."

When the nun had gone Anne Duncan paced up and down, possessed by a demon of restlessness. Her hands were opening and closing in accompaniment to the feverish thought in the great black eyes, so like those of her nephew, Seumas. "If only—if only it could happen now—if he could only see her before—" she was muttering disjointedly when there was a low knock and in response to her "Come in" the girl she had come to see entered.

When last Anne Duncan had seen Dympna she wore her ordinary short, black school dress with the tiny serge shoulder cape, the white collar and

cuffs and the little black lace cap with its fall of net crowned her glowing hair, which in spite of hairpins and neat coils insisted on straying into curls on her forehead. She had just been a healthy, happy postulant, still, after nine months, new-fangled with convent life. If the Dympna who now came to her with a glad little cry of welcome had opened the door for her to-day, she would not have recognised her. The heavily pleated serge robe fell in graceful folds that almost, but not quite, concealed the lithe young figure. But the snow-white coif, the white band that encircled her face, covering her forehead till even the eyebrows were partly hidden, and the white veil peaking out over her face revealed none of the girl—only the nun.

“I’m so, so glad to see you, Anne ; it’s just next best to seeing mother,” and she kissed her visitor in a fashion that was anything but nunlike.

“Well of all the changed beings ! ” gasped Anne, “your own mother wouldn’t know you.”

The novice’s face clouded suddenly and the joy of seeing her friend died out of her eyes. The flush of excitement, too, had left her cheeks and revealed them devoid of all the lovely colour that had once been Dympna Donnelly’s pride. And the eyes, how big and tragic they were, thrown up, muddier and more restless than ever by the white band above them. “Mother ! I had hoped she might have been able to come to me for Easter.”

"She cannot leave home. There is nobody else to look after the shop ; now that you are gone she is doubly tied down. She was telling me you wanted her up for Easter, and I would have kept shop as best I could and insisted on her taking a few days' holiday—only—well I couldn't put off my own visit—it—but I will see that she comes soon," she finished lamely.

The nun did not seem to notice her evasiveness. "Is she very lonely ?" she asked in a low voice.

"I am afraid she is. Your leaving was very hard on her, but now she believes it to be God's will she is resigned."

Anne could see that the girl behind the nun was suffering intensely from something, and like the Mother Superior she was unable to define what that something was.

"Poor mother," she murmured, "it seems an eternity since I saw her. It's strange that I think so much of her and of home and everybody in Clonell—" A tiny flush crept into the pale cheeks and she moved her chair out of the light of the window, then went on. "The other nuns though they have fits of homesickness now and again seem to become altogether detached from home, but I simply can't forget it."

"And are you quite happy, Dympna, perfectly happy ?"

She answered quickly, "Happy ! I am simply

longing for my profession, longing to take the final step. Another year till then ! It seems an endless length of time." There came into her eyes the exalted expression that made Anne very much afraid that she had a vocation after all, but the indirectness of the answer did not escape her.

" But I want to know are you happy—are you content ? All nuns I have known seemed to me the embodiment of placid content ; all—" She paused, then abruptly, " Except you. Dympna, for God's sake answer me, are you happy ? "

The girl's mouth quivered pitifully and she lowered her head. " I ought not to say it, Anne, but I've been worrying about mother. The remorse at leaving her to live her life alone—to die alone, has been terrible. But, I must not grumble ; it is part of the sacrifice."

" And how is it the others do not feel it so ? "

" Perhaps I am called upon to make a greater sacrifice."

There was that in the answer that made Anne seek to probe further. " Is that all ? There is nothing else troubling you ? "

" Oh ! Anne, Anne, don't—let's talk about something else."

But Anne Duncan would not. In this mood the young novice was at her mercy, and in the end came out the whole story, of the sacrifice that had

been offered to plead for Ireland before Him who had placed it a little green gem in an ocean whose boundless expanse was not great enough to keep out the discord and strife that began with the invasion of Milisean and Norman and Dane and had its sequel in the struggle in which the life of this daughter of Erin was bound. It was a tale of continual suffering, continual remorse, continual longing to be out and doing for her country, at a time when the service of the meanest individual was of price ; of the longing for her profession because she knew that once the die was cast, she would become more reconciled. But what of it all ! She had counted the cost before coming and she was paying with all her heart.

" It is a relief to have told you after all, Anne ! In boxing things up I suppose really I magnified them. But how are things going politically these days ? Not that we are not up in everything in here," she laughed, " but you may have some special tit-bit of news."

Anne Duncan paid no attention to this. She was regarding the novice before her with eyes that suddenly brimmed over with tears.

" Dympna Donnelly," she burst forth suddenly, " I think you are one of the biggest women Ireland has at present, if it only knew it. You splendid, magnificent, glorious girl ! Oh, Dympna ! I never thought half enough of you before."

The girl flushed with pleasure and opened astonished eyes. "But it was so little, so very little; how can you be so enthusiastic, Anne?" Then softly, "Your appreciation will help me to keep from looking back all my life."

Anne started and the thoughts came swirling back again, the thoughts and hopes that the Mother Superior had aroused. "Dympna Maveurneen," she said earnestly, "don't you think you ought to tell all this to Reverend Mother?"

"No, I don't. It was fairly easy to tell you, but I can't go saying things like that about myself to anybody else."

"I think it is her right to know it. More, I feel you are bound to tell her."

"You think so?" she queried in a frightened voice.

"I am sure of it."

"Then I will tell her; it is all a part," she finished in a strained voice, "but come along and see our garden, it is gay with spring flowers."

Anne caught her arm with its weight of cape and big loose sleeves. "Promise me that you will tell her immediately I have gone."

"But Saturday is her busy day," protested the novice.

The grasp tightened. "To-day, to please me, Dympna, tell her to-day."

"Very well, I promise," she answered in the

same strained tones. "I haven't yet asked where you are staying?"

"With the Duncans of course. Kate wanted to know if you could come out and see them one day while I am here——" She broke off abruptly, but Dympna responded promptly.

"No going out for me," she smiled. "When I am fifty perhaps! but not now. I must earn such privileges first. They were so kind to me when I stayed there long ago. Give them all my love. And—Seumas?"

There was a pause. At last. "Seumas and John are in Dublin."

"Both," in surprise. "What about the shop?"

"The shop is in trustworthy hands. Peter is here too."

"Good gracious! Is the whole county in Dublin? What on earth is up?"

"A volunteer rally."

"Why of course, I had forgotten. We heard rumours that it was off, but I suppose there was nothing in them."

"No, nothing," responded Anne hurriedly.

## CHAPTER XIII

CLONELL had seized gluttonously on the episode of Dympna's entering the convent. It provided the best piece of gossip that had come its way since the Larne gun-running. Even the Lanigan, Beaumont set had taken it up, owing of course to its interest in Sydney. Dympna had snatched him from them and Dympna was made to pay. "I suppose she thought he would marry her. My ! but she must have got a sell to actually enter a convent " ; and so on.

Clonell would have got the surprise of its life had it known that it was handsome Sydney Hamilton who was the rejected, and not only that, but who was carrying about with him the commodity that people call a broken heart.

And under all the gossip, day by day the line that divided the Orange and Green had grown thicker and thicker, blacker and blacker, and two men who were on either side helped heart and soul in the thickening and the blackening to drown the bitterness that had unknowingly been brought into their lives by the young novice who in the silence of the cloister, praying and working, was

giving her life that they might one day clasp hands across that drawn line.

Yet, if Dymphna Donnelly had been aware of the havoc she had created, none would have been more surprised than she. Nay, none would have suffered more than she, for the pain of remorse is even as great as that of unrequited love, and to one of her imaginative temperament would have bordered on torture. As it was, it was something very like torture that the girl had undergone during the second of her two years' novitiate. The seed of unrest had been sown, the first wild flap of brain against the prison bars given, when she had been scarce a month in the convent. It occurred on the fatal twenty-sixth of July, when the Irish Volunteers landed at Howth the arms that were to defend them from their Covenanting brethren. They, being commoners, merely the people and not the wealthy minority with a fawning government behind them, were deprived of the peace and privacy of operation which had been granted to those from whom they sought to defend themselves.

From a top window Dymphna had watched the motors full of police dash past. She had heard the rousing, triumphant cheers that heralded their refusal to fire on their fellow-citizens, who were only doing what others three short months back had done with impunity. She had seen the lorries

of armed soldiers dash past, then she had heard the shots—just a few stray shots, and the lorries returned citywards, empty—they had left the soldiers to march back. Later they had come, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, with a hostile troop of rowdy women and hooligan schoolboys at their heels—and they too went citywards. She had gone to the chapel, but she could not pray ; she had remained there for the best part of an hour and on coming out she had met the Mother of Novices, who sent her across to the hospital on a message, and there she found an atmosphere of frozen horror. For in July, 1914, violent death was still the most terrible of earthly terrors. The news had just come through that the soldiers on reaching Bachelor's Walk, goaded to desperation by the conduct of the mob, were called to a halt by the officer in command and formed in a line across the road. He was about to give orders to fire on the ring-leaders of the crowd. The soldiers had not waited for the order—twenty-one of them fired indiscriminately upon the people nearest them. They had killed three and wounded thirty-eight.

For two days horror, indignation, and every conceivable emotion had striven for the upper hand, to be followed by the same maddening feeling of enforced inactivity—that had driven her to the cloister. Her anger and that of the

whole country was at a very terrible pitch when suddenly it collapsed, and the thick choking cloud that swept across Europe, settled upon it and obscured it from the naked eye. Only in the hearts of a wronged and worn-out people the scar remained.

When Austria declared war on Serbia that summer day in the end of July, and the August sun saw Germany and Russia in arms, and the world waited with bated breath for the decision of the Ruler of the Seas, Ireland was saved from the rôle of avenger. Ireland, the warrior nation from time immemorial, held *her* breath also. On August the fifth Germany realised that in leaving Britain out of the reckoning, she had put her foot in a hole from which there was no withdrawing it. Germany had been depending on Ulster's display of naughtiness. Britain's arm was paralysed by the menace of Civil War in Ireland. Had she, Germany, not supplied the guns and munitions to Ulster ? Did *she* not know the magnitude of the coup with which Britain would have to cope ? Yes, Britain with her fleet and army, such as the latter was, was out of this affair. So said German statesman. But they forgot to wonder whether Britain would stand by and see little Belgium and little Serbia the victims of a great bully. Germany was indeed given the surprise of her life when the trumpet called forth for the volunteers

who flocked to France's aid, and Britain was at war.

During those first few months of the world struggle Dympna too, in the seclusion of the convent, forgot the tragedy of that July day. To her young heart war was surrounded only by the glamour and fascination of a pageant. She had to stifle a longing to be out there, nursing, participating, nay, even fighting in this great history-making epoch. Under the postulant's cape had beat a heart full of all the emotions that youth felt when the war was still the latest fashion, and only real to those whose hopes were wilted and whose lives were seared by the lick of its flame.

Dympna's nationalism had again undergone a period of part submersion like that it had experienced during her friendship with Sydney Hamilton, but this one also had its sharp awakening when Anne Duncan sent her a copy of a daily paper in which she had blue-pencilled two paragraphs. The first was a report of a meeting in Belfast, in which the Ulster rebel leader boasted of the guns in possession of the volunteers, which were to be used immediately the war was over if the Government dared to enforce the now forsaken Home Rule Act. The second paragraph gave statistics of the numbers of Irish who had rushed to join the new army in those first months of war.

Nationalist Dublin, the Nationalist South, had beaten loyal Ulster out of all bounds. Ireland, in proportion to her population, had then more men in the British Army than England herself, and recruiting showed no signs of abating.

"Why had Anne Duncan marked those paragraphs? Of what was she thinking?" she had asked herself. That was Nationalist Ireland's revenge for Bachelor's Walk! Well! it was a noble one. Home Rule had been put on the shelf till after the war. Nationalist Ireland said nothing. They could have insisted on having something done to improve conditions in the country, but Britain was harassed by war and they did not trouble her.

Then, unaccountably, the Government began to bestow distinctions and great place on the men who had done their best, first to throw Ireland into an internal struggle, and then to bring about the European War. Some of them entered the Government, and the others were given the salt of Irish civil appointments. Dympna's apathy relaxed. With the majority of people in Ireland she opened her eyes wider and wider in incredulous amazement as each day brought a fresh insult to the nation that was giving of its best blood to its insulter. And then she realised the danger—the terrible danger, and because she could not cry it forth from the house-tops she had suffered as only one of

such a type as she could suffer under the circumstances.

The war and all its tragedies and its glamour became a thing apart, no, not a thing apart, but a thing that was being used against her country for its downfall. Hour by hour, minute by minute, it was draining all that was left of a population bled white by centuries of oppression and emigration. There would be none left to carry on the country's life, much less to fight for her rights against the narrow, bitter opponents into the hollow of whose hands they had been thrown. No one seemed to realise what was happening, the girl's tortured brain had told her. No one was thinking of Ireland. What did it matter to her who won the war if by then had bled to death in soul and body the Roisín dhu whose life since the beginning of time her sons had fought and suffered and died to defend. She had come to take this tortured thinking as part of her sacrifice, and when Anne Duncan had come to see her it had so become a part of her that she accorded it only passing mention. Over a year of it had produced in her a mental sensitiveness of extraordinary refinement, and it was with an active hatred of her mission that she sought the Mother Superior in her study after Anne Duncan's departure, to put into bare, clumsy words all that was sacred to God and herself.

. . . . .

When an hour afterwards Dympna emerged from the Reverend Mother's room there was a queer hunted look in her eyes, and there were tear stains on her cheek. She swept along the corridor blind to all about her. Little Sister Paul was passing, and seeing that something was wrong, ran to her; but she only pushed the startled little nun from her and swept on. She had no idea whither she was bound, but as the little chapel opened out of the corridor she entered. Instead of going to her stall she shrank into a seat 'neath the shadow of the iron grill that divided the Sisters' choir from the part of the chapel devoted to outsiders and the hospital patients.

For a time she remained with her face buried in her hands, trying to forget what had just happened. But facts would be faced, however she dreaded them, and with a shuddering breath she straightened herself and decided to face them bravely. After two years, during which she had completely severed herself from the world, she was to be thrown back into its maddening whirl. The peace and cultured companionship of the convent was already torn from her, though she still wore the habit that was the pass to it. She would pass out of the lives of those who had grown to love her and whom she had grown to love, without a word of farewell. She had come one day, quite suddenly, to take her place in their midst, and

they had welcomed her but had not questioned her. She would go as suddenly, and if in their hearts they would wonder why, no one would question her going. In their hearts they would pity her for all she had missed, and pray for her, while they thanked God more fervently for making them secure.

She looked round the dim chapel. Coloured gleams of light from the stained windows lay upon the polished floor and one of them took a twist upwards and fell across her *prie-Dieu*, on which her meditation book lay open. Who, she wondered dully, would fill it when she had gone? A bell echoed through the house. The nuns would be coming to Office. She could not bear to meet them. Rushing to the altar rails she flung herself on her knees. The altar was one mass of narcissi against a background of white and faintest gold. Banks of their slender forms rose away above her and ended in a pinnacle; and intersected in the form of stars and an outer ring in the shape of a heart were the candles that when lighted on the morrow would make a scene of wondrous appeal. She had helped to arrange the altar for Easter Sunday and now . . . The flame inside the red sanctuary lamp gave a flicker as if in sympathy, and her self-control gave way.

"Dear God! why don't You let me stay?" she sobbed frantically. "Why don't You accept

my sacrifice altogether ? Why, oh why, are You satisfied with a part ? ”

A soft tread sounded on the polished floor behind her. The sisters were coming to Office ; and she, who was one of them no longer, fled.

## CHAPTER XIV

IN the front sitting-room of the suburban home of Anne Duncan's father-in-law, Anne herself sat toasting her toes at the fire, and leaning against the mantelpiece, his hands in his trousers pockets, was Seumas Gallagher. He was clad in a well-cut uniform of dark heather green, against which shone the polished brown leather harness. It was the uniform of an officer of the Irish Volunteers. Anne wanted to think of other things, but since the morning's interview, Dympna would not leave her mind.

She had decided to keep to herself the hopes that she had, since the girl's confession, allowed to become anticipations. If for a moment it occurred to her that the Mother Superior *might* take the novice's desire to offer this sacrifice of her life, as a sign of a vocation, she thrust it from her and her plans for the future distracted her mind from the dread of the unknown that wellnigh o'erwhelmed her soul. She determined to visit the convent early the following morning—very early. And who knew what the morrow might bring. Who knew but she might see again the teasing

laugh in her big boy's eyes, and the indescribable change in him disappear ! If Seumas Gallagher's aunt had idolised him when he was a gay, light-hearted youth, her whole mother feeling for the motherless boy had gone out in sympathy to him when he had discovered love and lost it in a night. Dympna's name had never again been mentioned in private between them, and Seumas shared the opinion of Clonell at large that the girl's sudden rush into convent life was the result of disappointed love—love for Sydney Hamilton. It did not strike him that such action was cowardly ; in another he would have judged it so, but he could never associate cowardice with Dympna. His heart bled for her, but the pain of loss was mitigated by the knowledge that he would not have to stand aside and see her love given to another man. Like her, though his love for Ireland dominated his life, he was very human, very jealous, and such knowledge gave him untold consolation.

Anne broke the silence and her eyes were troubled.

" What time will your father be home, Seumas avic ? "

" I'm afraid it will be late. I left him with Commandant M——, and their work will take them far into the night. At ten o'clock I must be with them again."

" If you are to be out late sit down and rest, boy. You have been on your feet all day I'll be bound."

Seumas pulled up the sofa and threw himself down obediently.

" And Peter ? "

" Uncle Peter ought to be here later. He will have to come out again with me however."

The woman laid a heavy hand on a lithe out-stretched limb. " Boy, if I only could guess, but I can't. It's the suspense, the dread of the unknown that is so awful to bear," she said in a shaking voice.

Seumas covered the hand with one of his own. " I wish I could help you, Auntie Anne, but until to-night, even I know very little and that little I cannot tell."

" I understand, I understand. I don't wish you to tell me anything, but I am so afraid—it is a relief to speak of it to somebody. I have no hopes, only fears for what is to come."

The man's voice was very earnest and his eyes grave as he answered slowly and thoughtfully, " Perhaps more than you have fears, fears that are of appalling magnitude, but even if the worst are realised there is behind them a dazzling hope—it is more than an hope, it is a vision, of Ireland a nation once again."

" God grant it, Seumas ! "

They both stopped to listen as a gentle knock resounded through the hall and a minute after the little maid of all work opened the door and announced, "A lady to see you, ma'am," but almost before she had finished speaking the lady had walked in.

Seumas sprang to his feet and stared as if petrified at the new-comer. Anne Duncan, after a shock that drove all the blood from her face, recovered first.

"Dympna," she ejaculated weakly.

Yes, it was Dympna. Dympna, who now that she had cast aside the stately habit of a nun, looked so thin and childish in her short black skirt and her old black school coat with the astrakhan collar.

The girl's eyes sought first the face of the man, and they wandered over the well-knit figure with that suggestion of radiated power and vitality that she remembered so well. Then gradually she seemed to realise things and she looked doubtfully at Anne.

"You don't seem glad to see me, Anne. Perhaps I shouldn't have come—I ought to have gone straight home," said she with difficulty.

Then Anne Duncan recovered. She rushed across and startled the girl by the fierceness of her embrace.

"Where else would you have come, but here,

Mavourneen ? Dympna Machree, you have made my heart glad this Easter Eve that you have come back among us. But you are done up, dear, come and sit down while I get you something to eat," and she pushed her into a chair, noting keenly the dull pain in the tragic eyes and the set white face.

"Don't go yet. I want to tell you, Anne, now at once."

Seumas had not moved, nor spoken since Dympna entered ; now he made a movement to go, but she stayed him with a gesture. "Please stay, Seumas, unless of course you would rather not know."

He sat down, and as she pulled the black fur cap from her head and leant back wearily, he bit his lip savagely. Her beautiful hair was gone and only a close crop of curls crowned the small head. With all his heart he thanked fate that Anne Duncan was there else he could not have controlled the desire to gather her into his arms and comfort her as he would a child, though he knew the effort would be futile.

"As soon as you had gone, Anne, I told Reverend Mother everything. It was desperately hard, but from the first she seemed to understand, and that made it easier. If I had known what the result was going to be I would never have told," this grimly and slowly,

"The shock was dreadful—I don't think I shall ever forget it—to leave when the goal was so near. She said your visit and my telling her was a sign that God did not wish me to continue my sacrifice, that He had other work for me to do; that perhaps He had exacted these two years to test my willingness to serve Him. So you see He did not want my life after all—I was wrong in thinking I could enter without a vocation and live through the noviciate without it being discovered. Though they would never have known by word or act of mine, had I not told," she finished abruptly.

"You are not glad to be free again," cried Anne, aghast.

"I shall never be happy again. No one who has lived all those months in the peace and tranquillity of a convent, however great other sufferings have been, could ever forget the beauty of the life," she replied disconsolately.

Anne sighed heavily. She would give her up. This morning the nun had been unhappy because she was a nun, though resigned, more, determined to persevere; now, not six hours afterwards she was unhappy because she had got back her freedom, and in such a way as to set all doubts at rest, for had not her superior told her that God had other plans for her!

She looked across at Seumas. He appeared utterly bewildered.

"I don't think Seumas has the remotest idea what we are talking about, Dympna. May I tell him?"

She nodded an absent assent and did not seem to be listening while his aunt related the extraordinary story of her desire to enter a convent. His face was in the shadow and she could not see what effect her words were having. When she had finished he remained silent.

"You must think no more of this now, dear. Why! for a young and pretty girl life is full of wonderful things. Who knows but you may live to thank God for this day yet. Now I will leave Seumas to entertain you while I see about supper."

When they were alone Dympna stirred uneasily. She wished Seumas would speak first, but it was evident he had no such intention. The silence was getting on her nerves.

"I suppose you think I'm an awful fool, Seumas," she blurted out at last without looking up.

Still silence. She turned her head sideways without lifting it from the cushion on which it rested. He had not expected that, and he drew back quickly into the shadow of the mantelpiece. It was too late however. She had seen. How well she knew that long, intense look with the love and the heart hunger in it! Sydney Hamilton had had it in his eyes during the latter part of

their friendship—or was it flirtation? But there was something more in this, something desperate—compelling, and she felt the blood mount quickly to her face. He saw it and with an effort pulled himself together.

“I think you have done what only a very great character could have done. With no thought of reward, no thought of self, you made that supreme sacrifice for Ireland. If only a part of it has been accepted, I have not the slightest doubt that your pleading has been heard; that you will live to see your prayer answered. I have no words to express all I think of your deed.” His voice was hoarse with feeling, but suddenly it cleared. “My personal tribute is of little value to you, but on behalf of Erin will you accept the gratitude and reverence of one of her soldiers?” Quickly he rose, and dropping on one knee raised her hand and kissed it lightly but reverently, then almost before either of them realised what had taken place he was seated again, leaning back carelessly, his hands in his trousers pockets. It had all taken place so swiftly that it might have been a dream, only that Dymphna’s hand still tingled from the touch of his lips, and in his pockets Seumas Gallagher’s nails dug into his palms. Yet there had been nothing dramatic, nothing unmanly in the action. In its pure impulse it had been altogether dignified, the right thing in the right place, than which

in this rough world nothing is more deserving of praise. Because of this it caused the recipient no embarrassment, only a deep fervent gratitude, and it shone in the eyes she turned to his.

"I don't deserve all you think of me, of course," she said warmly, "but you have made me happier under my disappointment—much happier; but let us talk of something more cheerful. I'm afraid I'm a sorry visitor to entertain."

"I would rather entertain you dead than anybody else alive," he laughed. "I mean it in a nice way of course."

This was something like Seumas, thought Dympna, and was more at her ease. "Do you know that I have never seen you in uniform before? stand up and turn round on your heel."

He stood up obediently, and saluted gravely.

"You look astoundingly nice," she remarked smilingly, taking in everything from his boots to the jet black hair above the green of his coat, and lastly the glowing dark eyes. How handsome he was! She had never till now really known how handsome. Much of his boyishness had gone, and in its stead was a gravity that she had not before known! No, she would never again think of him as a boy. He was a man, with all a man's power and strength, and a great surge of satisfaction swept over her at the thought that a man held her in such esteem as Seumas Gallagher had

betrayed. And that look she had caught in his eyes ! She began to wonder if she had imagined it, for there was now no trace of it left. It disturbed her so, she thrust it from her thoughts for the present.

“ Your rank, sir ? ” she enquired, still smiling.

“ Captain in the ——,” he stopped short.

“ Yes ? I like to hear you say it.”

“ Another time I will finish it for you—if the fates will it,” he answered lightly. “ But you do not ask for your friends in Clonell.”

“ I had forgotten for the moment. Meeting you all here seems so like Clonell. How are things going politically these last few days ? I am afraid my two years out of the world have resulted in very complete ignorance of many things on my part. We knew of course what was going on to a certain extent, but we young n—— people were not allowed to see newspapers of course. Do bring me up to date, Seumas.”

“ The latest tit-bit is not yet widely known. It seems that Ireland is to be conscripted without delay. The first step has been taken in the form of a secret order to disarm the country straight away. The raid for arms will probably begin on Monday or Tuesday. I scarcely think it will be Monday as it is the day of Fairyhouse Races, and since racing has been permitted to go on in Ireland for the benefit of English race-horse owners who

cannot race in England, and for their garrison over here, I do not anticipate that their little relaxation will be disturbed."

She leant forward, her face tense, her eyes black with horror. "Conscripted! But they can't conscript a nation without its consent. Besides, we're giving more men than we can afford, far more. And they'll keep on going until we are bled white; *that's* what has been worrying me. But conscription!"

"Yes, conscription. And it means more than the loss of men—that is nothing compared with the real issue. It means the downfall of Ireland. I never remember when we weren't fighting for the transfer of government from bungling, narrow men who had never been in the country in their lives. My father never remembers a time when he wasn't fighting to keep from starvation our own people. His grandfather never knew a time when he wasn't fighting for the *lives* of the people. And here we are fighting still. We are tired, very tired, but there is one last desperate effort left in us. You know how things have been going of late. You know that as usual English statesmen following a tradition of betrayal that they don't seem to be able to get away from, have gone over to the side of the wealthy Ulster Orangemen; have promised that Ulster need never have Home Rule. You know all that I suppose?"

She nodded silently. Were not these the things that had rendered her life miserable for many months ?

" Well, as sure as God is in heaven, if we allow ourselves to pay this blood tax, so sure is the whole national life, that we have fought all these centuries to preserve, dead. Ireland is to be given over to Orange rule. It will be Hell or Connaught again—you know what sort of a living a Catholic can get in the North—and there will be nobody left to fight against it. That's the latest news. What do you think of it ? "

" I think if it happens and if you were to go—which I know you wouldn't alive—you'd go over my dead body," she said simply. Then it dawned upon her that she had said something indiscreet, and she added gently, " Having no brothers, and you having no sisters, I'd do for you as I would for a brother." This too sounded all wrong and she hastened on, feeling that he was looking at her with that look of which she was now rather afraid.

" But is nothing being done ? There is only to-night and to-morrow left. Seumas, is there nobody, nothing to stop it—the disarming ? "

Her voice was full of passionate despair. All that her country meant to her—her life, her very soul—flooded again her being. She was sitting up straight, her hands gripping the arm of the chair

next Seumas, and her eyes gazing full of entreaty into his. He bent forward and looked deep down into them and said slowly, solemnly, “ Ireland will *never* be conscripted by an English parliament, *never*. Do you believe me, Dympna ? ”

“ More, I trust you—and your father,” she answered slowly and leant back again as Anne Duncan entered.

## CHAPTER XV

FOR the first time since she left home, exactly one year and ten months before, Dympna did not awake at five a.m. Even in sleep she recognised her freedom! All night long, till the grey that heralded the approach of the Easter sun began to lighten the walls of the room she had been thinking, thinking. In vivid pageant had passed before her all that she had left behind and in the fever-laden night her loss had appeared to embrace almost everything that made life worth while. Prayer and sacrifice which were all powerful were at an end. And now she could do nothing to replace them.

It did not occur to her that it was possible to continue both in the world. All she knew was that she was thrown back on that world, and because of her term of absence from it she would be more helpless than ever. People looked askance at a spoiled nun, and unless she could do something to win back confidence, to show that she was not a shilly shally featherhead, who did not know her own mind, she would have no influence to do even the least of the services her whole soul yearned to

give to Ireland. In the all-absorbing disappointment of the hour the future held only dreary uneventfulness. She would help her mother in the shop. She would grow to love dress and try to outshine the other girls in Clonell. She would live from one dance or social event to another. She would read and study a good deal. That at any rate would be consolation. Probably she would go on teaching at the Gaelic League, but all the longing to plead passionately for a whole-hearted, sacrificing work for the nation would be bottled up in her heart. Well, it was not her fault that she would not be taken seriously henceforth. Fate had been playing one of her monkey tricks on her. However, she supposed she would live through life like everybody else, just because she didn't want to. And so on, till nature claimed her meed of sleep.

The sun danced his Easter joy dance on a face from which all emotions were smoothed away, and over the cropped red-brown head, kissing it into gleaming copper, but she slept on, and when Anne Duncan entered at nine o'clock with her breakfast, she was still sleeping. As it was Sunday Anne knew her guest would not be pleased if she were allowed to sleep late, so she called her name softly. Dympna stared round sleepily and then she remembered and a troubled look came into her face.

"A happy Easter," sang Anne gaily.  
The girl roused herself. "Many happy returns.  
What time is it, Anne?"

"Nine o'clock, my dear. I thought I'd better awaken you so as to give you plenty of time to have your breakfast in comfort before Mass. We are going into Church Street, you and Seumas and I."

"I ought to have gone to early Mass, but I did not sleep very well. I was—thinking. And Kate?"

"Kate and the rest of the family were at eight o'clock Mass, myself included. They are all at breakfast now. John and Peter have to go out, but they will wait till you come down. Seumas ought to have gone too, but my good-natured husband has taken on his work so as to allow that young man to bask in the rays of your ladyship's presence till one o'clock at least."

Dymphna laughed and blushed, and Anne went away completely satisfied.

And satisfied she might well have been. She had started a train of thought that had somehow escaped from the pessimistic line the night had followed. Yes, reflected Dymphna, she had overlooked Seumas Gallagher. To him at least she could look to introduce something bigger into her life than the narrow trail of commonplaces she had mapped out for herself. If Seumas Gallagher's

friendship for her continued, things would certainly be less black. "But why have I put an 'if' in the matter? Why?" He had been at her beck and call—it amounted to that—during the short time she had lived at home. Even Sydney Hamilton had not altogether separated them, for the things that were out of Sydney's ken had been a bond between them even then. Though he *had* been different during those months. Now she wondered why. Looking back, things to which excitement had blinded her before, became extraordinarily vivid. The night of the dance. She tried to live it over again, but without the storm of onrushing emotions and experiences. Now that she could remember clearly, she had only seen Seumas dance once or twice that night, and he too had looked forward to the event so much. Instead of enjoying himself he had seemed very grim and unlike himself. Could it have been——

As if in answer to the suggestion she saw him draw back into the shadow of the mantelpiece in the little sitting-room below, and she thrilled in a frightened way from the remembrance of that intense look. And then Anne's laughing insinuation this morning!

She knew in her heart that she loved to think these things. During the last two years Seumas Gallagher's memory had stood out from that of

everybody she had known. Every hour of the day he had been in her prayers, but it had seemed so natural, she never questioned herself about it. Also, she had come to view him in a saner light. The glamour she had cast around him during the days she thought herself in love with him, was gone. She saw him as he was, his father's son, a man with all the enthusiasm of an idealist, and with ideals higher than those given to ordinary men, but tempered with the clear foresight and cool, calm powers of decision of the diplomat ; a man capable of great love, of great faith, and withal handsome as a young god.

But these things she was dreaming could not be true. She had done nothing to deserve that which she dared not, even in her heart, name. There were other women who would do great things for Ireland, perhaps—

She was quite unprepared for the spasm of jealousy that seized her. "How dare he think of other women—that is if he does ? But I have been away two years—two long years, and how could he have escaped being petted and run after in that time ? "

A whole host of bitter imaginings came to torment her and she tried to stifle them with thoughts of yesterday, but somehow she could not stimulate her regrets to the degree of poignancy they had reached in the night, however hard she tried,

and for the third time in her life she reproached herself on the grounds of instability.

While Dympna was thus worrying herself on his account, downstairs, Seumas was standing in the narrow entrance hall scanning himself absently in as much as he could see of the mirror of the hall-stand, laden with its complement of sticks and umbrellas and caps. He was waiting for his aunt whom he could hear in conversation with Kate Duncan in the kitchen. He did not turn round when she appeared, but remarked in casual tones that caused her to smile broadly.

"I say, Aunt Anne, I think you are much too busy to go in to Mass again. Don't you think I could be trusted to look after our guest?"

A gleam of fun crossed Mrs. Duncan's eyes. She mounted the first step of stairs and leant over the banister. "Certainly not. I want badly to hear the choir at Church Street. I believe it is unusually good."

He turned and came towards her swiftly. "It will probably be the last time I will ever have her to myself. Before the sun goes down on Monday I may be no more. If not then, well, by this day next week it's a pretty sure bet."

"Don't, don't, Seumas boy. For God's sake don't. God above! and I have been hoping for the future—I haven't been reckoning with that. I hadn't the slightest intention of going, I was

only teasing you, forgive me," and as she passed up the stairs the terrible dread, that the return of Dympna had for the moment dispelled, settled again on her heart.

Convent life had not only preserved all the spontaneous candour that was Dympna's chief characteristic of old, but it had intensified it. She took a delight in everything she saw that was childish in its enthusiasm. Seumas Gallagher found it difficult to reconcile this eager, interested Dympna with the girl of the night before with the tragic eyes and the expression of hopeless despair. If he had tried to analyse things perhaps he would have come to the right conclusion, that youth lives for the moment, and his companion was finding in his company sufficient to fill this moment of life. He sought no explanation, however, even in his thoughts, but just gave himself up to the moment too.

Up through the back streets, scarce two minutes' walk from the fashion and wealth of the big thoroughfares, through the streets that are Dublin's slums, they wended their way to the Franciscan church that is one of the most beautiful in the city. The people from the previous service were streaming out and hundreds were standing waiting to go in. The girl watched them all with eyes that missed nothing, as they stood by the kerb. Her

companion spoke softly and she felt a thrill in his voice.

"This is Dublin—real Dublin. Can you feel the grip of it, Dympna?"

"That's it. I've been trying to find words for the feeling; it grips one. I can understand now why everybody who has lived in Dublin says there is no place like it in the world."

They lapsed into silence again.

And yet, as each thought it over the words did not adequately express all those two young people felt. It was as if an inexplicable fascination rushed in to submerge all well-behaved disconnected emotions and set them struggling gently to reach the surface again. There are people who would have seen nothing in the crowd but its unusual mixture of humanity. Little ragged boys were the predominant feature. There seemed to be hundreds of them, hatless, sometimes coatless, with tattered shirt-sleeves appearing from a sleeveless waistcoat that once belonged to dad, and with bare toes and heels gazing through pieces of leather held together by string, on to a world which to them was quite a decent sort of place on the whole. A few were careering in and out among the people and if given a wallop with an irate cap the fun began. But most of them gathered in groups discussing with alert, eager little faces some mighty question connected with the disposal of

last night's "latest 'ditions." Dympna loved them, these little flowers of the slums. She had known them in the children's ward of the big hospital, with their splendid, indomitable courage, their independence, their faith and above all their wonderful *esprit de corps*. Deep down in Dublin's heart her newsboys are enshrined. When she loses them, as in the progress of the times she must, she will sustain a loss that will be irreparable, and some of her gripping power over hearts will go with them.

The rest of the crowd consisted mostly of men, for the women folk had attended the early Masses. They were as fine, intelligent, keen a set of men, these Dublin labourers, as one would wish to see. There were women in grotesque garments that hailed from the second-hand shops in Mary's Lane, white and wan and ill ; and young girls lively and gay ; everybody dressed in his or her poor best. There was a sprinkling of the middle classes and not a few befurred women and well-dressed men. Perhaps the most striking thing about it all was the bond of fellowship that held them together. These poorest of the poor carried themselves with an ease only inspired by unconsciousness that any difference existed between them and their social betters represented among them. They were unconscious also that their attitude conveyed such an impression.

The Irish are the most socialistic people in the world. A man with nine shillings a week sees absolutely no difference between himself and his employer, except that the employer has been more favoured by fortune than he. Because this equality is a recognised fact by him it does not occur to him that it is necessary to call attention to it by rudeness or aggressiveness as one finds it among the English working classes. If the Dublin flower-seller calls the English visitor "M'lady" or the "gentleman," it springs, not from the servility that the said visitor loves to write about, but from the blarney that covers a smothered amusement at the visitor's susceptible vanity, and perhaps in this attitude lay some of the fascination that Dymphna could not interpret. If she had been gazing for a year, instead of two or three minutes, she could not have put into words the atmosphere outside the church in that poverty-stricken street.

She entered with the crowd—a part of it, still puzzled but with the fascination deepening every moment. As she knelt through the Mass, an old ragged man telling his beads aloud on one side, and Seumas on the other, she became filled with peace and hope. Never for a moment was she unconscious of the friend beside her, who, had she but known it, was making his preparation for death.

"Let us go along and sit for a while in Stephen's Green ; we have plenty of time," Seumas suggested as they came out.

"I'd love to," she exclaimed. Then shame-facedly, "I am afraid I am enjoying my freedom."

He looked lovingly at the downcast face. "Why, Dympna, you were made for freedom and sunshine and, and—"

She recovered quickly and laughed heartily. "You *are* rubbing it in. Well, and—what ?"

"Love."

She was silent. He wondered if she was thinking of Sydney Hamilton. Then she looked up, her eyes full of the old mischief. "My dear boy, there is no such thing."

They had turned into Grafton Street. It was comparatively deserted. Only a few well-dressed people on their way home from church, a sprinkling of soldiers and some young officers with girls were visible. Dympna gave Seumas no time to reply, but hurried on, her eyes fixed on two young subalterns in front.

"I think the officers—I mean the British officers—are quite irresistible. They are fine chaps, though living exponents of the motto that 'Fine feathers make fine birds.' Nevertheless, they all seem to me wonderfully handsome and as like as peas. I wonder if I knew a couple whether I'd be able to pick them out in a crowd. Indignant

visitors at the convent used to dilate to the nuns as to the perfidious way in which poor little suburban Rathmines chased them around. I am afraid I sympathise with the poor Rathmines' girls," she concluded frivolously. Then seriously, "I really do like their immaculate khaki ; being a girl I can't help it, but beside the green of the Irish volunteers it is colourless, characterless ; symbolic of the great machine of modern war, that has changed the patriotism that we still know into cold automatism. Oh, Seumas, if all the boys could realise the do-and-dare impression, the impression of work to be done, not in a colourless machine-like way, but with the whole fire of men's hearts, that the uniform you were wearing when I arrived last night conveys, it would make up to all who have conquered the instincts that are a racial endowment, to stand by Roisín dhu and wear it."

" You understand that ? You know that there were times when it would have been easier to go than to stay ; times when even we longed to go ? " he said softly.

She nodded. Then slowly, " Why were you wearing it, Seumas ? "

He answered abruptly, even curtly. His whole being was longing to tell her how precious those words were to him ; to be allowed to tell her of his love before the fatal morrow, even though she

had nothing but friendship to give him in return. But the fatal morrow was the barrier. God alone knew how Erin would emerge from her twentieth-century's baptism of blood. Between now and then a curtain of inky blackness hung. No, he could not drag her into it. She must have no close connection with the man of to-morrow. He knew her capabilities for sacrifice, for remorse. She would blame herself afterwards for not trying to return his love. If Ireland emerged, as they hoped and prayed, a nation once again, and if she spared his life, then—

“ We had manœuvres in the morning and then the cancelling of the rally which was to have taken place to-day meant a lot of work, so I was busy at Headquarters all day. We always wear uniform on active duty.”

“ Do you—do you expect that the day will have to come when you will *not* take it off for mufti ? ”

“ In view of what has happened during the last few days, that day will come.”

“ When it comes I shall be able to do my bit. My two years have fitted me for nursing at least, thank goodness—though I will never be satisfied to do so little. I suppose I am too ambitious.”

Her words roused him to sudden apprehension. If she felt like that how were they to keep her in the house to-morrow ? Could they keep her if she

were determined to be out ? He knew they could not and he decided that Dympna must be sent home by the early train in the morning. It would be the last train to leave Dublin that day, and for many days to come, and it would take with it all the sunshine and glory that filled his heart this day.

Roisín dhu was his queen. She was claiming him. Did he regret his allegiance and what it was costing him ? God of nations ! no ! but it was terribly hard, desperately hard.

As they returned home Dympna was sensible of the change that had taken place in her companion. Something of the intensity of his feelings was reflected in her, for although she knew it not they were very closely bound together, he and she, by their common sympathies and aspirations, and identical lines of thought. Without her actual knowledge his suffering was borne upon her and it was the first indication of the tragedies at hand, though she was not yet to translate it.

## CHAPTER XVI

IN the small house which held three of the men who were to take such prominent parts in one of the most extraordinary chapters of Ireland's extraordinary history, it would have been impossible to keep from Dympna the fact that something of very serious import was about to happen. Towards evening they seemed to have forgotten her existence. Upstairs, in the room over the sitting-room occupied by Seumas and his father she could hear heavy boxes being dragged along the floor, and once there was a thud and a clank, and why, she could not explain, she began to recall the night Sydney Hamilton had found her with a sprained ankle, when her hand had rested for a moment on the rifle-butts projecting from the side-car of his motor bicycle. Even if it *was* the falling of a rifle were not all the Volunteers armed and what more natural than that Seumas should keep his in his room ? Still, she felt that the something that was in the air spelt trouble. What were they going to do ? and why were they going to do anything ? No, she could not make it out. But stay—— What was it Seumas had told her

about conscription ? About the secret note that had come through ringing the nation's death knell, for—Monday—or Tuesday. And Seumas had said—what had he said ? “Ireland will *never* be conscripted by an English Parliament, *never*.”

When her reflections had reached this stage Dympna could not restrain her feverish curiosity. She rushed upstairs to Anne Duncan’s room, expecting to find her resting. She knocked softly but there was no reply and she opened the door gently. At the far side of the room Anne, and her sister-in-law Kate, knelt beside a huge heap of bandages and surgical dressings which they were packing swiftly into a big hamper.

Kate jumped to her feet with an exclamation of dismay and a frightened look came into Anne’s eyes. Dympna leant against the wall, her hands hanging loosely at her sides. The questions that had been on her lips died away in face of the evidence before her. Then in a voice trembling and hurt she spoke.

“ I think, Anne, you might have trusted me.”

Anne rose. “ You go on, Kate ; I’ll be back in a few minutes. Come and let me explain, dear.”

They descended together. In the sitting-room Anne sat down before the fire but the girl stood with her back to it, a defiant expression about her mouth. Anne began to speak hurriedly.

“ We knew, of course—Kate and I—that some-

thing was going to happen. Some days ago we got orders to be prepared for active service. Only to-night we received definite instructions for to-morrow ; our respective posts we won't know till the morning. That is all I can tell you. It is all I know myself. I am telling you, because I know what you are—what you have done. Under other circumstances I could not have told a living soul. And now, I want to ask something at which you must not be offended. I want you to go home by the first train to-morrow morning."

An indignant protest burst from the girl's lips.

"I know what you will say, but, Dympna dear, you must think of your mother. It would kill her if anything happened to you."

There were lines about Dympna's mouth that her mother and those who taught her at school knew well. "I'm staying in Dublin. What's more, I'm going to help. If you won't keep me, then I'll go to an hotel. If you won't let me help you, then I'll get a gun, by fair means or foul, and I'll fight. You think I couldn't ? I can shoot wild duck ; and if I can hit a wild duck, I can hit a"—she shuddered visibly—"a man."

In spite of the awful seriousness of the moment Anne Duncan could not suppress a smile.

"You may smile," blazed Dympna, "but if you were aching every inch of you ; had ached every inch of you for six years to do even the

smallest deed that would free Ireland from the net that is tightening every moment around her, and that the autoocrats of Ulster and their Tory friends in England have almost secured—almost but not quite ; if you had done the only thing that was in your power to do, and had that thing flung back in your face, you would not smile. You would see in my being thrown back on Ireland's hands just now when I may be able to do that something, the answer to my prayers, my great chance. And I am *not* going to lose it," she cried passionately. "Anne, Anne, I must be in it."

In her heart Anne had known how futile her request would be, but she persisted weakly. "Your mother ; you must think of her."

"And your children, are you thinking of them ?"

A spasm of pain convulsed the elder woman's face.

"I am sorry, Anne, forgive me ; but I can't give in to you. You, too, let nothing come between you and Ireland, so you must know how I feel. I wrote to mother on Saturday, before I knew I was leaving the convent. I could not bear to write since. She will think me safe—that is if the convent is going to be safe. Anyway she won't worry about me as she would if she knew. Anne, you must not only give in, but you must let me go with you, wherever you go."

" It may mean risking your life."

" Bless you ! don't you know nothing would make me happier ? If mother knew everything don't you think she would be the very last person to hold me back," she pleaded, knowing what was coming when Anne made to interrupt.

" I'll have to see John about it."

" You will take my part ? "

" I shall tell him everything and he shall decide."

" Seumas will back me up."

Anne regarded her curiously. " Are you very sure ? Seumas it was who decided that you must go home in the morning."

" Seumas ! " aghast. " But surely *he* ought to have known me better."

" Ought he ? I didn't know that."

" Well now that's settled," Dympna said with relief, ignoring the last remark. " You told Kate you'd be back in a few minutes, and you've been here a quarter of an hour. I'd better come and help too."

In after years Dympna often wondered how she had managed to sleep that night of nights. But sleep she did, and soundly too. Perhaps it was that knowing the dream of her young life was about to be fulfilled, her brain was at peace at last. What-

ever the reason, she had cause to be thankful for it in the days that followed.

When she came to awaken her, Anne was fully dressed. All the others had gone out long before. Dympna was to remain with old Mr. Duncan and the little maid who had returned that morning from spending Sunday at home. She was not to be impatient. Anne had to arrange things at Headquarters first, but eventually a messenger would come for her. With this, the girl had to be satisfied and commenced for her a day of fevered waiting.

She was walking to and fro from sitting-room to front door, wondering impatiently if the messenger would never come, as it was now after eleven o'clock, when she became aware that there was a commotion in the street outside. Instinctively she knew what was the cause. She rushed out and joined the group that surrounded an excited man. She pressed forward, treading on toes and elbowing her way in, and nobody appeared to mind being trampled or pushed. The man, he was small and dark and had big excited brown eyes, was thoroughly enjoying his position.

"They've taken the General Post Office, the Four Courts, the College of Surgeons, Jacobs' and the whole city. They have all the houses in O'Connell Street; all the stations. The telephone and telegraph wires are cut and all the roads

guarded. Dublin is completely cut off from every place. It is an armed rebellion and they have proclaimed a Republic. The Castle people thought it was only horse-play and sent a squadron of cavalry to charge the G.P.O., but they soon found out it was serious play. There's a horse lying dead down near the Pillar this moment, and the rider of another horse has just been carried away. There must be a terrible lot of them altogether. Wonder what it will come to," he speculated.

He was deluged with questions. Was this road clear ? Was that road clear ? Most of the crowd that by now numbered a couple of hundred people, had relatives gone off for the Bank Holiday to the various seaside resorts around or to the races.

Suddenly there was the sound of firing ; the short, sharp crackle of rifles and, as they listened, the echo seemed to spread till it came from several directions. The faces that had been only curious or startled at first, became anxious and scared. Some of the people broke into groups to discuss what was best to be done, while others started off citywards. It was the prevalent opinion that this mad freak of the Volunteers would be settled by police and military before night.

Dymphna turned towards the house and on the step she met old Mr. Duncan. He was a tall thin man, with a pointed white beard and clear, deep-set blue eyes. These latter were lost in uneasy

thought, until the girl approached. Then he said sadly :

“ Ah ! Dympna, I wonder how it’s all going to end. I was bitter against it. I am still bitter against it, but a man like John Gallagher, who is worth ten of me, can never go far wrong. A good many of those who are in it were against it too, but they wouldn’t shirk it. God alone knows what it will come to.”

Then Dympna asked a question that had suddenly occurred to her. “ Are they rising throughout the country ? ”

“ That’s just it. There was no time to organise anything. The blow had to come now or all was up. They will rise in various parts, but they will be disconnected, and unlinked bodies, and as such I fear of little use. Ah ! that’s just it, child. If it could have been universal, old as I am, I’d be out myself, but as it is I’m not needed. Not but they asked me, but I knew I’d be only in the way among the young fellows. My day is over.”

“ You’ve done more in your day than any of them,” said Dympna enthusiastically. “ Then you don’t think it can do any good ? ”

“ I don’t say that. It will bring before the eyes of the world the real state of affairs in Ireland. Only a desperate people could be responsible for an insurrection at this time. And more—it may rouse the country. Defeat all along the line has

flattened them out. This may rouse the whole life of the nation, and again it may not. It may be for the saving of Ireland, child, but I'm bitter against it, because of the blood of all those boys. We can't afford to lose them, but God help me, I shouldn't be against it if it's for Ireland. It's my own blood growing thinner as I near the grave."

All day long came the intermittent firing, and towards evening no messenger had yet arrived for Dympna, and she was in despair. Many people had by this time come through, and each had a story more startling than the other to tell. It was quite true the Volunteers had complete control of the city and there was skirmishing at certain points where the military had endeavoured to get through from an outlying camp. Night fell, and still nobody came. Dympna absolutely refused to go to bed. She pulled the couch up by the fire and lay there all night wrapped in her coat, her cap lying ready in case her call should come. Towards morning she fell into a fitful sleep, and thus the little maid found her when she came in to "do out" the room at seven o'clock. She retreated open-mouthed and later returned to say breakfast was ready but there was no bread. Dympna volunteered to accompany the girl on a hunt for some, but an hour later they arrived back empty handed and very hungry. There was not a crumb of bread to be had. Easter Sunday

and Monday had been holidays for the bakers too, with the result that the shops were sold out of their scanty stock before Dympna and the maid arrived on the scene. Luckily there were some cold potatoes and, when fried with bacon, things were not so bad as they had first appeared. But if bread was not forthcoming before night it was an alarming prospect to face.

By midday Dympna had given up all hope of anybody coming to fetch her to Anne. She knew that the military were mobilising and in some places were putting up a hard fight to get through, and it had occurred to her that it might be suicide for any one to attempt to get out to her. She was desperately angry and disappointed, and had just decided to go down to the city herself and offer her services to the Republican Army, when a loud double knock resounded through the house. She flew to the door and outside stood a boy scout. He saluted gravely.

"I want to speak to Miss Dympna Donnelly," he announced.

"I am Dympna Donnelly. Have you come from Mrs. Duncan?"

"Yes. You are to come with me."

"Right! I won't be a minute."

Dympna flew in to Mr. Duncan, her face abeam. "I am going," she cried. "She has sent for me." She pulled on her coat and thrust her head into

the little fur cap and took leave of the old man who shook his head sorrowfully over her eagerness.

"God bless you and take care of you, child," he said in Irish, and a moment later she was out in the street with her guide.

As they made their way citywards through side streets—the boy informed her that he wished to keep as far as possible from the main road—people rushed from houses to ask them if they had heard any news, but the scout was altogether uncommunicative. The firing, which had been going on all the morning, was increasing and to entertain her the boy explained what the different sounds portended. "That's a machine-gun," he informed her once, "and it's down about Liberty Hall way—I mean its firing is directed that way."

Dympna grinned, but fortunately he missed the grin. She was unable to decide what age he was. He might have been anything between fifteen and seventeen, but she delicately refrained from hurting his pride by questioning it. He was quite nonchalant, absolutely business-like and treated her with a paternal, yet deferential condescension that amused her immensely. She wondered if anything would ruffle his superb sang-froid. He was small and slight and had very clear disconcerting eyes, in which she felt, rather than saw, an underworld of devilment.

Dympna did not know Dublin at all well and she had not the faintest notion where she was going. The firing was rather awful now that they were quite close to it. They had come to a crossing and she was stepping out smartly when the boy pulled her back.

"We'll have to run like hell across here ; the military's posted just in a line with the Square, and if they see anybody they'll fire. Now don't go getting shot," he counselled. "When I say three we'll both run together. On-ne, two-oo, thr-ee," and they dashed across. Sure enough, hardly had they reached the other side and the protection of the houses when a hail of bullets tore up the ground over which they had just passed.

"Lord ! but that was a close shave," smiled his lordship. They emerged into a wide street. Dympna was telling herself that danger was decidedly spicy, if you managed to get clear of it, when came a delighted yell from the model of outward perfection by her side.

"Cripes," he ejaculated. "I'm blowed if Finnegan hasn't another peeler. I wonder where on earth he got *him* this morning. Didn't think there were any more about."

Dympna followed his admiring gaze to where in the distance marched a stalwart Metropolitan policeman, and behind him a young boy scout,

with arm extended and in his hand a revolver levelled at the back of the exponent of the law's substantial neck. As they watched they heard a shrill boyish voice call out a command and he and his prisoner wheeled round the corner. Dymphna was laughing heartily. The docility of the huge man, the swagger and strut of the boy behind him made the most comic sight she had ever seen.

Her guide had forgotten himself completely. All the devilment in his innocent eyes had come to the surface and he was slapping his thighs in accompaniment to a series of loud ha ha's. When he had recovered sufficiently to proceed he explained gravely.

"When the Republican Government was proclaimed yesterday, the police were silly enough to interfere, so our soldiers had to take some of them prisoners. Finnegan got hold of a revolver—I don't know how—but out he went, and in two ticks he was back with a D.M.P. man. The policeman resisted of course, but Finnegan fired a shot in the air, and then he came quietly. Well, out and in he went till he had six of them, and then either there were no more about, or he got orders to stop. Where he has got this one beats me. Likely the poor man lives up about here and Finnegan happened to meet him. Though between you and me I don't think they minded being taken,

or they would have put up more of a fight," he said confidentially.

A bullet whizzed past and struck the wall just beside them.

"We had better lie flat and crawl along here," he directed. "We are in the middle of it now, and this is a hot spot."

Hot was a poor description, thought Dympna; blazing was more like it. There was a regular barrage going on, yet she was not in the least bit frightened. When she rose from dragging herself along on her face by the houses, she was in a sad mess, but she did not seem to notice it.

"Are we near where Mrs. Duncan is?" she asked at last.

"You are not going to Mrs. Duncan," he replied. "You are going to Captain Gallagher's area, opposite Headquarters."

"Oh," ejaculated the girl helplessly.

"Mrs. Duncan is at one of the outposts."

"But—but, I thought I was going to her."

"You have to go wherever you're needed," he replied indignantly, thinking she was funkling.

"Of course, of course, I must go where I am needed," she agreed warmly. "I was only surprised for the moment. Which Captain Gallagher do you mean—the young man or his father?"

"Captain Gallagher," he said loftily, "not Commandant Gallagher. *He* is at Headquarters."

It was all very vague, but it looked at if she were to work under Seumas Gallagher. For the first time she experienced a thrill of excitement, a shadowing of what was in store for her, when she thought of the lithe, active virility of the man in green two nights before. Was it only two nights ? It seemed a lifetime already. But there might be many Captain Gallaghers. It was a common enough name. And if it were another, would she mind very much ? Well no, but her hopes had been raised and disappointments were disappointments. She made another effort to find out.

" Is Captain Gallagher's name Seumas ? " she asked.

" Dunno ; all I can tell you is that he's a Northern and there aren't over many Northerns here."

Then it *was* Seumas Gallagher. Side by side with him she was to take part in the awakening of Erin ; the awakening that was to be accomplished by the dashing on her fair face of the blood of her children and her conquerors thickly intermingled.

## CHAPTER XVII

SUDDENLY her guide turned in through an open doorway and Dympna followed. A Volunteer sentry challenged them and on the scout giving the password they were allowed to proceed. It was a small shop and they passed into the back hall and up the stairs to the second floor. Here an opening had been made in the wall of the room adjoining the next house. They went through, and so on through half a dozen houses, all shops and store-rooms, till they entered one bigger and more substantial than the rest. He led her to a room at the back of the second floor, well protected by rooms on three sides and the row of houses at the back through which they had just passed. She saw that one room was an improvised hospital ward. That she entered was a kitchen, but it was not improvised. Everything pointed to its having been in recent use. A fire was roaring in the stove and two girls not much older than herself were preparing the midday meal. They greeted her warmly, both being friends of Kate Duncan's and they had been expecting her. Her escort saluted and withdrew.

"Isn't he the limit?" laughed one of the girls.

"A most awe-inspiring limit," responded Dympna.

"Was he impressing you with his importance? Anyway he's a true blue is Michael."

"Am I to hang out here and help you?" enquired Dympna, anxious to know her fate.

"Yes, you're to help with the cooking. Kathleen here is a full-blown nurse and she's only here till she gets some work to do in her own line. Thank God there are no casualties so far."

Dympna was somewhat disappointed that her task was to be the less romantic one of feeding the warriors, but she set about it with a will, and tried not to ask too many questions all at once. She helped to carry the food into the front room where a few of the men were on duty behind the barricaded windows, then downstairs to a large hall-like compartment. She came in the wake of her two companions and as she reached the bottom of the stairs Seumas Gallagher, handsome, smiling, gay, now that the fat was in the fire, came from the back of the entrance hall to welcome her. He had evidently been waiting for her, for he knew she had come. He took the heavy jug from her and said softly, "Cead mile failte, Dympna."

"You honour me, my Captain," she replied with demure respect.

He laughed. "Yes, I am your captain; there

is not the slightest doubt about that," he responded enigmatically, as they passed into the room together.

"What did he mean, or did he mean anything?" she wondered, then gave herself a mental shake. This was not the time for lapses into the sentimental and silly imaginings.

And Seumas Gallagher's band were as gay and light-hearted as he was himself. In after days Dympna was to realise that even at that moment each one of them knew that they would not hold out longer than a week, not because they could not, but because of the citizens who were already feeling the want of bread, and that each one of them had resolved to die fighting in the cause whose seriousness, in the apathy that had overtaken the country, they alone realised. Still there was no trace of those firm resolutions in the men who were chatting and laughing with their cooks. A few of them, like Seumas, were in uniform, but others wore only the necessary trappings with civilian clothes, testifying to the short time that had elapsed between the receiving of orders and the mobilisation. Some of them were men of Seumas Gallagher's own standing, one or two professional men, most of them members of the Sinn Fein Society that was shortly to give its name to this desperate, terrible, futile act, that in spite of its futility was glorious in its pure, unalloyed

sacrifice. Also there were the keen intelligent men of the working classes who filled the ranks of the Irish Volunteers, but only a few of whom came under the banner of Sinn Fein. They were the seceders from the Nationalist policy, the men who had refused to be blinded by the feeble inefficiency of the leaders who were bartering their country for less than the proverbial mess of pottage—for nothing at all. They were all men who knew what they were doing. They believed the end had come and the price had to be paid if Ireland was to be saved, physically and morally, and they were going to pay it with all their heart. If others had through them to pay as well none regretted it more than they, but it was inevitable.

They were discussing the looting that was taking place in all the deserted shops around, but their numbers being few, they were helpless, as they could not spare the men to keep guard. One man was relating his experiences for Dymphna's benefit.

"The bullets might have been hailstones for all the attention they paid to them. We couldn't keep the street clear this morning. The military had the sweep of it from Trinity College, and right up against the Pillar stood an old dame, with the bullets peppering round her. Twice or three times we went in turn to escort her away, and how we got back alive I don't know, but back she was

again before we were right in. She said she wanted to see everything! Then down the other way a regular army of the Upper Gardiner Street ladies helped themselves to C——'s fur coats and headgear. Wish to the Lord you had seen a fifteen-stoner in a pair of buckled shoes that just about fitted her big toe, and a round thing like an upturned saucepan with feathers growing out of it, on her head. She had taken possession of a boot shop and was selling them off at thruppence a pair, laces thrown in," he said with amusement. "But it's too bad, though I don't see that we can do anything. It's another of the things that has to be," he finished regretfully. He would have been less worried about the contents of the shops had he foreseen Dublin two nights later, one mass of leaping flames against the clear deep blue of an April night.

During the afternoon the men were continually going and coming, and Dympna did not see Seumas again. The firing increased as the day wore on but she had become so accustomed to it as to take little notice of it. When night fell a lull came which lasted, except for occasional spasmodic bursts, till morning. Once she had gone out on the landing to see if Seumas was anywhere about, and from below had come the monotonous sound of many voices in unison. She strained her ears to listen. They were saying

their evening rosary in Irish. A feeling of reverent wonder came over her. Cant and the religion that is trotted out on every occasion she regarded with profound contempt, but the simple prayers of these men waiting for death, men who probably had never mentioned their religion in outside conversation twice in their lives, keeping it for practice alone, stirred her to deep admiration.

Later she again went out wondering how they were passing the time. This time she heard only animated and laughing voices. As she listened they stopped and somebody began to sing in a full rich tenor voice.

“ Alas ! and well may Erin weep,  
That Connaught lies in slumber deep.  
But hark ! some voice in thunder spake,  
The West’s awake ! the West’s awake ! ”

She listened, her whole body tense, lest she might miss one note. Ah, God ! The night of the dance ; what would she not have done to recall that frivolous, wonderful night ? A note of passion was creeping into the singer’s voice, and the words rang triumphantly through the building and out into the deathlike stillness of the night.

The tears were streaming down Dympna’s face. She did not know why she was crying. With the exception of the morning of her dismissal from the convent, it was years since she had cried, for disappointment and suffering had rather a hardening

effect on her character, an effect that tended to freeze rather than let loose emotion. She had not known her two companions were beside her till one of them spoke.

"It makes me feel like that too," she whispered.  
"Who is it?"

"Seu—— Captain Gallagher," replied Dympna, ashamed that she had been caught.

The night was long and dreary and still. The stillness had something sinister about it, and the girls were unable to sleep, for they knew not what moment their services would be needed. When day dawned they were wide-eyed and energetic, fighting off the lethargy that was creeping over them. The preparing of breakfast came as a diversion and relief. They had just cleared the remains of the meal away when a terrific bombardment commenced. The streets around were being swept by machine-guns on the roof of the Theatre Royal and at the back Liberty Hall was evidently the object of the shells that every few minutes passed over the house-top or struck the roofs around. The bombardment continued all day long and the Volunteers were retaliating from the windows at the back. Towards night in one of the adjacent houses a fire, started by child looters, broke out. If it spread down their direction it would mean that they would be compelled to evacuate. The smell of burning wood, pungent

and choking, permeated the air, but word came that the men would probably be able to check its spreading and the girl felt comforted. She did not want to evacuate so soon. By nine o'clock Dympna's companions were thoroughly worn out from their sleepless vigil of three days and two nights, in spite of orders that they were to go to sleep as usual in the little ward that had not yet been needed, so Dympna insisted on their going to rest while she stayed awake. They were no sooner down on the hard mattresses than they were sound asleep.

Dympna walked about restlessly wondering, wondering. If she could only have known what was going on at the outposts, but she knew nothing. There had been no time for questions that day. She began to cut bread for the morning, buttering it as she cut and packing it into a tin box to keep fresh. She anticipated, and hoped that the girls would sleep the night through, so she would have to get breakfast alone, perhaps. She was rubbing gently the great welt on her finger, that was the result of the bread cutting of yesterday, when Seumas Gallagher entered.

"Cut yourself?" he asked anxiously, coming towards her.

"Oh no, it's nothing, only from the handle of the knife. I say, you *do* look done up," she said, scanning the lines the strain of the past days

had made round his eyes, which glittered in a brilliant way that made her uneasy.

"Oh, I'm all right. But you must not overdo yourself. Where are the others?"

"Asleep in the next room. They were up Monday night. I wasn't, so I insisted on them lying down. Seumas, I do wish you would go to sleep for a few hours."

"Yes, I'm going to. The chaps below won't give me any peace till I do."

"Well, you'd better stay here. It is much the quietest place in the building and I'll fix up a shake-down."

He hesitated a moment, but Dympna was already pulling out an old carpet that was packed into a corner, and which she had discovered earlier in the day, and arranging her coat as a pillow.

"Very well," he answered slowly. "You are very good to me, Dympna."

"Good to you! Don't you know anybody in the world would do the same thing for you in my place?"

He remained silent. So it was not just for him she was thinking. It was for the Volunteer.

"No, no. You must keep your coat. You will need it during the night. No, I cannot allow that."

"You'll do just as you're told, Seumas Gallagher,

If I feel cold it won't be till near morning and you will be awake by then."

"I shall of course, but I won't have it."

"Very well, if you won't, I shall wait till you are asleep and then I shall put it under your head, so you see there is no use going against me." And so on till Seumas gave in, first exacting a promise that if she felt chilly she would take the coat. Then he went down to give orders to his men to sleep and watch in turn and to call him in exactly two hours time. When he returned Dympna was cutting away. She had her back to him and did not turn as he entered. He understood and flung himself on the strip of carpet and a few minutes later he was breathing heavily.

But for Seumas Gallagher's brain there was no rest. Half an hour after he was lying on his back, his head pillowed in the crook of his arm, and a whole string of incoherent mutterings pouring from his lips. Dympna stopped cutting and gazed at him with troubled eyes. He was giving orders to his men. He lived again through hot encounters of the day. Dympna did not know he had been out of the building, but from his mutterings she gathered that he had been conveying ammunition to the outposts under the very noses of the military. Then she caught her own name. It was difficult to make out what, he was saying, he babbled so. By degrees it dawned

on her that he was calling her his Black-North girl. He was saying they were cruel to send her here to torture him, when he was going to leave her. No, no, he dared not tell her. Then suddenly he sat up and again he was leading his men. "That's it—there—we have them, boys—quick, dodge—now—" He was up with a bound and was making for the door when Dympna sprang forward and caught him by the arm, her voice soothing him as she barred his way. He insisted on passing and she had to use all her strength to force him back.

"Seumas, dear. It's I, Dympna; won't you do what I want you to do?"

He paused, his eyes now open, staring at her blankly, but he was sound asleep. Still talking, in a low soothing voice she pushed him gently back and he lay down again obediently. She sat on the floor beside him, her hand holding his, and for the remainder of the two hours he slept a quiet refreshing sleep.

It was shortly after eleven when a man came to awaken him. When he looked around him Dympna was cutting and buttering, her back towards him, just as when he had gone to rest.

"That was good," he exclaimed, stretching himself luxuriously, though he was still heavy with sleep.

"Not long enough," replied Dympna curtly.

"I don't see the slightest necessity for your getting up now."

As if in answer a burst of firing sounded in the distance. He sniffed, and made a wry face. The burning smell was more pungent than before.

"I must go and see how the land lies," he said, and hurried off upstairs. In a few minutes he returned and put his head inside the door.

"Dympna, L——'s is burning like matchwood. Would you like to have one glimpse?"

"Rather," she responded with alacrity.

She followed him up the narrow attic stairs, and, on the landing that was protected by stone walls, he paused.

"This is our danger zone," and she heard the smile in his voice; "but if it were dangerous now I would not bring you up here; the firing may begin any moment so you may just dart across, peep through the look-out and dash back again. Stay here till I call you." He strode across in the darkness, illuminated only by the intermittent flashes that came through the opening, which was in reality the skylight barricaded up to leave only a small hole. When he had secured the best position he called her.

"I'm here," she said quietly. She had been standing beside him all the time.

He said nothing but motioned her in front of him. The sky above them was red as a furnace.

The glow as it merged in the distance growing thinner and thinner till it dissolved in the blue of the night that was spotted with silver stars. Neither spoke ; they scarce dared breathe ; it was a sight that inspired a terrible awe, an awe that drowned all sense of its beauty. The girl turned at last, her face outlined clearly in the red glow and she found the man's eyes fixed upon her. He motioned her towards the door. She did not move. Then at last she whispered :

“ Why should I go ? ”

“ You must—quick, it is dangerous—I ought not to have brought you here at all,” he said rapidly. He was holding himself in with an iron control, and she knew it. Still she did not move.

“ Dympna, go,” he commanded despairingly.

She obeyed, walking slowly across the room in the darkness ; bumped up against the door, and came to a halt. “ You seem in mortal terror of me, Seumas. I think you might tell me why. You see, if you stick your head out through that hole, and ”—gulp—“ get shot—I’ll—ah ! gradh mo croidhe,<sup>1</sup> why don’t you help me out ? ” She was groping her way to the landing, but she paused as he came up to her in the darkness.

“ You said there was no such thing as love,” he said thickly.

<sup>1</sup> Love of my heart

"I'm ready to be convinced," she laughed nervously.

All resolutions were swept to the winds, and Seumas Gallagher entered into his kingdom ; and none deserved his crown better than he.

"I must not obstruct the army in pursuit of its duty," said Dympna primly a few minutes later. "Please, Seumas Gallagher, may I go ? You have made a horrible mess of my scanty locks. Such indiscipline should not be allowed."

The firing again started in the distance and as they listened it came nearer.

"Run down, darling ; I must see what is going on."

She flung her arms around his neck passionately. "God must not let you die, Seumas. He *must* not," she whispered vehemently and slipped away, and the man returned to the look-out.

Dympna had only just reached the kitchen when a Volunteer passed her. He must have been half-way up the attic stairs when from above came the sound of a dull thud. Her heart stopped beating. The man broke into a run. There was silence for a time, then steps descended the stairs. He put his head into the kitchen. "Casualty," he said. Then in an uneven voice, "The Captain's shot," and he passed on down.

They brought him in a few moments later and in the meantime, as if in a trance, Dympna had

aroused the other girls and assisted in preparing to receive him. She stood aside while the men laid him on the mattress that was too short for him. To her there was no difference in death and that white, still face. At his right shoulder his tunic was sodden with blood. She watched the nurse cut away the clothes and set to work. So he must not be dead or she would not have done that ! She said nothing till all was over, then she asked harshly, " Will he live ? "

The young nurse did not answer at first, but the girl's eyes compelled her. " With good nursing, yes." Then swiftly, " He will be all right, Dympna ; the boys are going to bring him to hospital. He'll have every chance."

Dympna set her teeth. Was she forgetting Her who had the greater claim on him, aye, and on her ? Was she forgetting Roisín dhu ? And again she turned towards the table and went on cutting.

## CHAPTER XVIII

DYMPNA never quite knew how she came to be crossing to the G.P.O., the headquarters of the Irish Republic, in company with a Volunteer, shortly after midnight. She could never remember receiving any message, never remember leaving the other building. She was in the middle of the street when things began to force themselves upon her.

She was brought right through to one of the smaller offices. In passing, she realised dimly that there were very many people about, four times as many as in the building from which she had come. Everything was quiet and orderly and dignified and the atmosphere of steady work recalled her to earth. When her escort knocked at a door, announced her and departed, and she found herself standing before John Gallagher and another man, she was almost herself again, and the events of the last few hours were borne upon her with increased poignancy.

"Well, Dympna, so you have insisted on living up to your one-time resolve. You are a Fenian in real earnest now."

With a rush came back to her that summer evening of her childhood, when Seumas Gallagher had saved her from death. At another time she would have been flattered to find that saying of hers so well remembered by John Gallagher, but to-night it only made more terrible the pain of anxiety, and regret for the years that had withheld their secret from her. She forgot the strange man and looked up at the father, her eyes leaden with pain.

"Only a few minutes before," she said hopelessly, "we discovered that we loved each other."

The father bit his lip, and she remembered. She was not the only one who was suffering. He held her hand tightly ; then said at last in a steady voice :

"Dymphna, I am going to entrust you with some work of vital importance. I know quite well you will give all your thought and physical strength to carry it out. It is a very difficult, and as far as your personal liberty is concerned, a risky job, though that risk we will do everything to lessen. We want you to get through with a message to the North."

Her whole demeanour changed. Her eyes sparkled ; her cheeks flushed, and all the tiredness went out of her body. Recollecting John Gallagher's rank, she replied promptly, "Certainly, sir."

He patted her shoulder and his eyes grew misty. He knew only too well that though there was a vague, distant chance she might one day become his daughter, as such he would never meet her in this world. He put her into a chair and gave her clear, rapid instructions as to the towns she was to visit and the people to whom the message was to be delivered.

"We cannot help you to get out of the city ; you must not be identified with us at all. You will have to trust to your wits. If you can reach Drumcondra and get Kate Duncan's bicycle, all will be well. Nobody will stop you on the other side, but I fear you may have much difficulty getting there. Indeed, you may not be able to pass at all."

"Trust *me*," said Dympna, with what was as near a grin as was possible at such a momentous time.

"We do. Here is a return half of a ticket to Clonell. You can catch the train at Drogheda—I expect the train service will be going on as usual there. Go now, and sleep, and in the morning I will send for you and examine you to see if you remember all the names, as it would be fatal to mix them up. I will give you money—you may need plenty and again you may not—and then you must learn the despatches off by heart, as I do not wish you to have anything incriminating

on you in the event of your being suspected and searched."

"Yes, sir," she replied, and retreated towards the door. Her hand was on the handle when she turned. "Mr. Gallagher, is—is Seumas going to die?" she asked in a choked voice.

He came across quickly. "No, Dympna. He is going to live for you. Good night, daughter," he said, sighing heavily, and giving some directions to the Volunteer who waited outside.

The man left her in charge of the little band of nurses who were having a busy time, but nevertheless they fulfilled minutely the orders that it was important that Dympna should have a good rest, and soon she was having the first sleep, if fitful spasms of semi-consciousness could be called sleep, since Easter Monday night.

By nine o'clock the following morning, which was Thursday, Dympna was ready to depart on her mission to the North. Half an hour before she had been examined by John Gallagher and had come through with flying colours. Now she made her way through the long corridor towards the main entrance, why she knew not, but something within her prompted her to take a silent farewell of the jaunty, confident, light-hearted army, that was going so splendidly to destruction. In one room she passed, a khaki-clad officer, a couple of soldiers and four policemen were chatting gaily

and affably with the Volunteers, whose prisoners they were. There seemed to be the best of good fellowship between them, and it pleased her. This chivalrous camaraderie was one of the essentials of these men who were staking Ireland to awaken Ireland's soul. She moved on just as a door, almost opposite to where she had been standing, opened and two men bearing a stretcher entered. It was not at the occupant of the stretcher she looked first, but at the boy who was stretched across his body, barely touching the wounded man, but resting on his hands and toes on the stretcher's sides. It was her little guide of Tuesday morning. It was Michael. As the mournful procession passed clear of the street door the boy sprang lightly to the ground and disappeared.

"The shrapnel was flying like mad, and the kid insisted on protecting him from further injury, though he's about done as it is," said one of the bearers in a voice that was not quite steady, to the nurse who had come to meet them.

A great swell of admiration for the child who had protected his senior with his little thin body surged up in Dympna's heart; but boy and deed were thrust aside as she caught a glimpse of the face of the man on the stretcher. His jaws were set as if in agonising pain; his eyes were closed, but the girl knew he was not unconscious. Had John Gallagher heard his bearer's remark? Was

he done ? Was he not to live to see that for which he had given every hour of his life an accomplished fact ? Ah ! Roisín dhu was a hard mistress to serve—hard and bitter—but she had always been so ; she had always claimed the flowers of the flock, and—what was she doing ? Wasting moments that were more precious than gold. He had trusted her. He with the grim, tortured face, who not an hour before had been so full of life and power. She cried in her heart, “ I am glad I am going. I can’t stand any more.”

She sped up the stairs that soon would be a mass of crumbling mortar, and out through the gaps in the walls of the houses at the back till she emerged into Henry Street. She had not the faintest idea where to go, but following the directions of a Volunteer, she dashed across the road to a narrow laneway and through subsequent alleys into a wider street. Here she halted undecided which way to turn, but eventually made towards the right, and discovered that about her the houses were occupied. She knocked at a door to ask the way, and it was opened by a disreputable woman whose hair hung about her shoulders in a sticky, lank mass. When she heard Dympna’s query she let forth a volley of abuse, deeming rightly that any girl who was in this dangerous quarter at that moment must be connected with the rebels. Dympna knew the type. She was obviously one

of the "allowance" women, whose better half had been in the old army. She was moving away when a man from the next house appeared to see what all the fuss was about, and he gave her the required information so explicitly that she found no difficulty in following it.

She passed on up a hill towards the church that stood where four roads met on its crest. As she neared it a fat woman, stumbling along under a heavy burden, tied in what appeared to be a rich, blue plush tablecloth, emerged from a side street and deposited her bundle on the ground to rest. After some meditation she left it and entered the church, and as she did so a slip of a girl darted out from a tenement opposite, grasped the bundle and disappeared, hauling it in her wake. By this time Dympna had decided that the bundle contained loot from one of the shops that had suffered so badly on Tuesday, and she could not hold back the low delighted gurgle of laughter at the bad luck that had overtaken this possessor of ill-gotten goods. As she came up to the church the owner of the bundle emerged. The woman stood quite still gazing blankly at the spot where her treasure had been. At last she ejaculated fervently. "Well, glory be to God ! and who'd think the Dublin people were such a thievin' pack."

Dympna left her still gazing mournfully at the pavement in front of her and went on her way

after one last look back at the city ; the city that on Sunday had been so full of life and vitality, but was now silent as the long years on the other side of the grave ; silent save for the sounds that were like no other sounds on earth, the intermittent sounds of the machines of modern war ; and colourless in its silence, save for those gay emblems of orange, white and green, that here and there hung between earth and heaven, swaying softly as in mother pity over that city of the dead.

Now came the most difficult part of the journey. She was nearing a bridge over which she must pass, and she could see that it was barricaded and guarded by soldiers. Would they let her pass ? If not how was she to get out of the city ?

She walked up to the barricade and hailed the sentry. He paid not the slightest attention to her. She might as well have been addressing the air. She spoke again. No reply. She yelled her hardest. He glanced at her carelessly.

"No passage this way," he replied, and turned away again.

"But I must get across. I want to go home," she cried. "Please tell your officer, or whoever is in charge, that I want to speak to him."

The man did not move. Her heart sank lower and lower as each precious minute passed, but she was determined to get across by fair means or foul. At the other end of the bridge the main body of

soldiers was established. If she could only attract the attention of somebody who would listen to her at least. She began to mount the barricade.

" You'll get shot, if you do that," remarked the soldier.

" I don't care. I might as well be dead as in the city with no place to go. I want to get home."

She had secured a firm footing on the barbed wire and she waved her arms wildly in mid-air and shouted at the top of her voice. This was a bit too much. The soldier came towards her grasping his gun with its fixed bayonet in a threatening manner to frighten her.

" It's all right, don't worry. I'm not coming over yet," she said calmly, getting down. She had attained her objective. The tall figure of an officer was already swinging across the bridge. Inwardly she was boiling with anger. The soldier sentry had the flat monotonous accent of the North ! She was longing to tell him what she thought of him, but for the present she was a wary diplomat.

As she watched the officer approach she became gradually aware of something familiar about his gait. She leant against the bridge and waited. He came straight towards her and his face into range of her vision. It was Sydney Hamilton. He did not recognise her yet and she had the advantage of him. His expression was stern, his

demeanour unrelaxing. When he was within a few yards of her she spoke.

"Hello, Sydney," she hailed evenly.

The soldier turned and gazed at her with wide-open mouth. Sydney Hamilton stopped short and looked at her intently. In the shabbily dressed, dishevelled figure, he saw nothing of the dainty Dympna of old, but the white face, with the big, staring, muddy eyes under the crumpled fur cap, was the face that had engraved itself on his mind the morning they had separated for ever—though at the time he did not believe it—and had remained till it had almost become a part of his mentality.

The girl was shocked at the intensity of the gladness that the sight of her brought into his eyes, and she was speechless for the moment under his "Dympna," which conveyed volumes of meaning to her. With an effort she recovered herself. What ill wind had blown him there? she asked herself bitterly. If only he had not revealed that intense joy at the sight of her. Ah, well! It was for Ireland, and he was Ireland's enemy; but oh, how she hated trading on his friendship. If only it had been anybody else!

"Do you usually employ deaf men to guard bridges?" she forced herself to ask casually.

"He isn't deaf," he replied; then quickly, "how—I thought——"

"I was a nun. I have left the convent; I was

not professed, only a novice. It was a mistake. I never ought to have gone. I want to get home. I want to get to a friend's house near here. There I can get a bicycle and cycle to Drogheda and catch a train. Your man would not let me across ; he would not even call you when I asked him, so I had to attract your attention some way. I did get a shock when I saw you. May I go across, Sydney ? "

" I suppose so. You seem harmless enough," he said, smiling. " If you are only leaving the convent you can't be in league with the rebels." In his own mind he was wondering why the nuns had permitted the girl to leave at a time when it was almost certain death to be out of doors in the city, and he came to the conclusion that she had run away. The recent events had probably unlocked the prison doors and caused the tyrant Reverend Mother (the typical Presbyterian idea of a convent) to relax in her usual terrible discipline, and the bird had flown. So Sydney Hamilton explained to himself a question that would otherwise have been difficult for the girl to escape without causing suspicion. He allowed her to pass and, as he accompanied her across the bridge, he said in a low voice :

" Dympna, you don't know what it means to me to see you again. I don't want to die out there now, and until this hour I did not care."

Then, in the tone she remembered so well, "Can I lend you any money, kid ? "

"Thanks for thinking of it, Sydney, but I have enough." Then, passionately, when she could keep it in no longer, "Oh, Sydney, Sydney, how can you do it ? How can you fight against them—your own countrymen ? How can you stain your hands with their blood ? "

He shrugged his shoulders. "I'm in the Army, you must remember," he said grimly. "You know the penalty for disobedience ? "

"I don't. If the officers who mutinied at the Curragh had suffered it, then I'd know ; but seeing they were rewarded with promotion, I think, apart from the main point, disobedience, if you're an Orangeman, pays better than placid obedience. But, Sydney, don't you think every man of honour in the whole wide world would back you up for refusing to shoot down the people you were born among, and have lived among ? "

"There you are, at the same old thing," he said with forced gaiety. "Can't you say you're glad to see me ? " he asked wistfully.

She was seized with compunction. They were almost within earshot of the soldiers.

"Poor old Syd," she whispered, "you can't help hating us, even though you don't know why ; of course I'm glad to see you, but I wish it had been any place else in the world."

She was across the bridge. Her hand was still cramped with the fierceness of his farewell grip, but she had already forgotten him. Before her, beckoning her, was now a grim, tortured, death-white face ; now an attic lighted with a red-hot glow that revealed to her the great passionate love of a man's life ; now a limp, inert figure stretched on a mattress that was too short for him ; now the slight thin figure of a boy shielding a body with his own. There were surely wings on the feet that carried her along so swiftly ; wings of love ; wings of service.

Dymphna remained silent through all of Mr. Duncan's flood of questions. She pumped away steadily at the bicycle and refused to speak. She dared not even think of how things were going. She dared not even put the question to herself. Then how could she answer it ? "

" I know nothing," she answered at last, " except that—both John Gallagher and—Seumas are wounded seriously." And with that he had to be satisfied.

She spun along the smooth roads with an exhilarating sense of freedom. What a huge slice of life she had cut off since the last time she had mounted a bicycle and drunk in God's pure air in these great, long, swilling draughts. Her thoughts now returned to Sydney Hamilton. His reception of her had disturbed her. When she had time to

give it more attention she knew it might disturb her more. She had known he was in the army. Her mother had mentioned the fact of his joining in one of her letters. He was looking handsomer, more debonair than ever in his khaki. Poor Sydney. Then again came the thought of that other figure in a uniform of another colour, who had also only a short time ago been handsomer, more debonair than ever. The bullet that had found a home in him, in her lover, might have been fired by Sydney Hamilton. Only for that haunting, disturbing look she would be hating Sydney now, despising him, but instead she was making excuses for him, blaming the environment that turned out his type, that moulded him without his knowledge.

She spied a little tea shop and she remembered that she had had nothing to eat since seven o'clock, and it was now mid-day, so she entered and sat down at one of the small, marble-topped tables. There were some soldiers at another table and they were discussing the rebellion with the proprietress.

With the peculiar insight that enables most Irish people to tell at a glance whether a person is Catholic or non-Catholic, and therefore Nationalist or Unionist, Dymphna knew at once that the woman and her husband, who stood in the background, were Catholics. They hailed her eagerly, asking for news, but she had none to give them. She

listened for a while and then she realised something that gave her to think. The Nationalists had no sympathy with the rebels. She gathered that everybody outside their ranks considered them stark, staring mad, a lot of crazy fanatics. Nobody could see any point in their actions. Nobody could make out why they had risen.

"It seems that if they hold out for five days they must be declared a Republic by International Law," said one of the soldiers contemptuously.

"Don't believe that!" said another. "If it was the whole country, maybe, but not Dublin only."

"Ah, but they might have thought to rise all over the country; how do we know, but they *have* risen? We know nothing so far. They say there are fifteen thousand of them in Dublin, and it would be no thanks to them to hold a good part of the country instead of a bit of a place like Dublin," said the first man pompously.

"There are not fifteen hundred of them, much less fifteen thousand," said a clear cold voice, and Dympna stood up and asked for her bill. "I've been told that on good authority," she put in hurriedly, fearing she might draw suspicion on herself, and made a hasty exit.

The refreshing cup of tea did not quite dispel the tired feeling that she had been unconsciously fighting all the morning. She had not slept much

with the noise of the guns, and the air instead of keeping her active, was having a drowsy effect on her. Her ankles were growing extremely painful. She supposed it was from the standing during the last few days and nights, when her restless moods would not let her sit for any length of time. As she neared Drogheda the pain became excruciating and she determined to go to an address John Gallagher had given her in case she required assistance, and beg to be allowed to bathe her ankles before continuing her journey.

She sought the house and was received by a charming, motherly woman who took instant compassion on her pitiful plight. She made Dympna lie on the sofa while she took off her boots, only to find that both ankles were badly swollen. She bathed and bandaged them herself and insisted on her guest eating a dainty meal, never once asking a single question. Then, drawing the blinds, she left her to rest till her train for the North would be due. But when that time came Dympna was sleeping the deep sleep of exhaustion, making up for four sleepless nights and days, and her hostess did not awaken her.

## CHAPTER XIX

THE morning light was streaming in through the yellow blinds when Dympna awoke. Her watch had stopped, but the hands of the clock on the mantelpiece pointed to seven o'clock. She did not yet know that another day had come since she had lain down to rest, and in her distress at having missed her train, which was due at six, she forgot to wonder why there was bright sunlight at seven in the evening. She heard distant sounds in the house and decided to wait a short time before going in search of her hostess, for she felt she must reach her destination that night, and she wanted to make her plans. She would have to take a motor as far as Dundalk and bring her bicycle with her, as her ankles were still swollen and painful. She would catch the night mail to Clones and if there was no connection for Cavan then she must motor again, or if things came to the worst cycle. As she was cogitating thus her hostess opened the door softly and peeped in.

"Ah, you are awake," she said, advancing.

"Yes. I feel quite refreshed. As I have missed my train I'm afraid I'll have to motor to Dundalk

to-night. Do you think I will be able to get a car easily ? I must not make a fuss, you see."

" But you can go by the nine train this morning, dear. Why motor ? "

" Nine train this morning," gasped Dympna blankly. " It—it isn't morning, is it ? "

Mrs. O'Brien laughed and nodded. " Yes, you've slept all night."

Dympna cried out in dismay. " But I ought to have gone on. He trusted me, and now I have failed him."

" You haven't failed. If I had awakened you last evening you would only have collapsed on the journey. You would not have been fit for anything. To-day, you are better and you'll be able to make up for all your lost time. No, you could not have done anything yesterday," she reasoned, and though Dympna was impatient she was convinced.

" Now come along to my room and have a wash and I shall bandage your ankles with lint, and then see you off after you have had a good breakfast."

" You're awfully good to me. I shall not forget your kindness," said the girl gratefully. Then as an after thought: " You haven't anybody in Dublin ? "

" I haven't seen my two boys since Easter Saturday," the woman answered quietly.

It was midday on Friday when Dympna reached the little Cavan town where her message was to be

first delivered. She went straight to the house to which she had been directed and asked to be put into touch with the local leader of the Irish Volunteers. The man to whom she made her request eyed her sceptically. It was clear to her that he considered her a fraud, though he did not say as much. She looked such a bit of a thing to be an envoy from the newly proclaimed Republic. In reply to her passionate appeal to waste no time in helping her, he melted somewhat and queried :

“ Don’t you know that it’s all up ? The morning paper says they are about to surrender, that they can’t stand out any longer against the thousands of military who have been shipped across, and the gunboats they have brought into the Liffy, not to mention the incendiary shells and bombs and armoured cars. When did you leave Dublin ? ”

“ Early Thursday morning.”

“ And things were going well then ? ”

“ I thought so.”

He shrugged his shoulders and left her to return accompanied by the man she wanted. He was a big, broad-shouldered man of the working class, clad in corduroy trousers, a rough tweed coat and slouch hat.

She delivered her despatch word for word. It was a call for assistance, a call to rise, even at the last moment, all over the country. Dympna knew

that others of like nature had gone out ahead of hers to other parts, and of this she informed him on her own responsibility.

"But if they are surrendering it is too late now. It would mean useless loss of life," the man argued. "Besides, we have no ammunition worth talking about, nothing like enough to force our way through to them, or even to hold out here. Why, I ask, didn't they wait till the whole country could rise together ? "

"Do you trust your leaders so little that you do not see only the last possible extremity could have made them act so ? The country was to be disarmed on Monday. It was life or death for Ireland," she retorted coldly.

"Oh, we trust them. They knew what they were doin'. One of these days, I suppose, we'll know all about it, but I tell you, Miss, we can't do anything as things are now. If you had got here on Tuesday or even Wednesday, we'd have risen to a man, but now in the face of this surrender business it would be pure waste of life, as we haven't the necessary ammunition. I tell you what, I'll call a council meeting and if you come here tonight, you'll hear what they have to say, though it may be too late then to act."

"Yes, it may be too late then," she agreed, sick with disappointment. It was quite evident to her now that the little band of rebels had not even the

sympathy of the majority of those from whose ranks they came. The man's manner had displayed frank disapproval; she supposed he too deemed their deed a deed of madness.

"I must get a motor to reach the other towns," she said sharply. "Will you order one for me?"

The men looked at each other.

"The only motor for hire is owned by the hotel people—Protestants. It might be risky. The man might notice the houses you go to, and draw conclusions. He drives commercial travellers all over the county and what he doesn't know about the people's political and other affairs isn't worth knowing."

"Couldn't I take him only to one or two places, and then chance getting another car to take me on?"

"You could do that. Take him as far as Cloonbeg and you can get McNally's car there."

"That will mean visiting three places on the way, won't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll have to risk it. If my luck here is going to be repeated very often, it doesn't much matter whether it's discovered or not, does it?" she asked wearily. "Please get the car as quickly as possible."

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It was night when Dympna had delivered her last message and the car turned again towards Cloonbeg. She had done her best. She had more than carried out her orders. She had pleaded, exhorted, and she had failed. Had John Gallagher himself been the envoy on that day when the sun went down for the last time on the recently proclaimed Irish Republic, he could have done no more than she had done. Even had she arrived on Thursday, she would have been too late. In every town and village she had been up against the same arguments, the futility of it, the madness of it, the impossibility of holding out, and above all those ever-increasing rumours of surrender to the superior military forces. Here and there she met with admiration for the daring of it, for the genius displayed by these few hundreds of men who had completely upset the British Isles for one whole week, and were setting America agog with demands for explanations. But sympathy she found none.

In the little hotel at Cloonbeg she put up for the night, going straight to bed after her arrival at nine o'clock. She had been asleep some hours when she was awakened by a loud knock at her door. She opened her eyes. It was pitch dark and she was intensely sleepy. She could not keep her eyes open, and she turned over again with the delightful knowledge that she had been dreaming,

that morning was still a long way off. Another knock. This time louder. She sat up and became conscious enough to feel frightened.

"Who is there and what do you want?" she called in a small voice.

"It's the police sergeant. I want to see you for a minute, Miss," came in a man's voice.

Dympna felt mechanically for the matches on the table beside her bed. She lit the candle and got out in a dazed sort of way, and pulled on her skirt and overcoat over the flannel nightdress the landlady had lent her, for she had absolutely nothing with her but what she wore. She crossed the room in the same dazed way, carrying the candle, and opened the door a few inches. On the landing stood a policeman who in the flickering light seemed to have assumed immense and terrible proportions. In the background hovered the landlady, a startled look on her face, for the reputation of her establishment might be at stake.

"What do you want?" asked Dympna pettishly. She was very, very tired. The policeman gazed in amazement at the childish-looking figure, and the head with the mass of short tumbled curls which appeared to be that of a girl of fifteen. At last he said reluctantly:

"I'm sorry, Miss; I have to arrest you."

"What time is it?" she asked blankly.

"It's near twelve."

"But—but—can't you put it off till the morning?"

"Sorry, Miss, you must come now."

"But I'm *so* tired." This pitifully. "I give you my word of honour not to run away."

"I can't," in desperation. "You must come now."

"I can't come like this, I must dress. I won't be long." She retreated into the room and made to close the door, but he pushed in a large flat foot.

"You must not close the door."

"Glory be to God, Sergeant, quit showin' off; haven't you any decency at all," interposed the landlady, throwing caution to the winds. "Can't you lave the poor wee girl to put on her clothes in peace, at self ? "

"It's against the rules," was the stiff reply, and he remained keeping the door ajar with his foot.

Inside, Dympna was dressing rapidly behind the door, her teeth chattering with cold. She felt weak and helpless in the presence of the burly lump of humanity on guard outside. But she was still too dazed and tired to think, and it was with a carelessness borne of lack of realisation of the seriousness of her position that she accompanied him downstairs. As they reached the open front door, she halted. Then a ringing, musical laugh echoed up and down the silent street and died away

in gurgling merriment. Lined up on either side of the door were six stalwart young policemen with rifles and fixed bayonets.

The darkness did not quite cover the sheepishness of their demeanour when they saw their prisoner.

"What did you think you were going to arrest ? A zoo let loose ?" she demanded contemptuously.  
"Lord, but it takes the Government !"

At this juncture the sergeant reminded her that everything she said would be used in evidence against her, and they moved off through the dark silent night to the barrack. Arrived there she was marshalled into the Day Room with its bare, white-washed walls, its well-scrubbed deal tables and forms with heavy iron legs. There was a gun rack on the wall and on it the men placed their rifles, not daring to glance in her direction as they did so for fear of the big, muddy, mocking eyes that were fixed upon them. They were young and shy and just now they were feeling excruciatingly small in spite of the inches that had secured for them the soft job of ornamenting the Royal Irish Constabulary. They made their exit as quickly as possible ; the sergeant also, and she was left alone with the night guard. He pulled a form up to the roaring fire and endeavoured in his awkward way to be kind.

"Would you like a cup of tea, Miss ?" he enquired.

She shook her head. "Well, sit up to the fire and warm yourself."

"Am I to sit here all night?" she queried doubtfully.

"Yes."

"And then?"

"I don't know what will happen to-morrow. That'll be for the D.I. to decide."

She moved mechanically across the room and seated herself on the form by the fire, sitting by necessity stiffly upright, her back against the whitewashed wall. The young policeman left the room for a few minutes. When he returned Dymphna said :

"You ought not to have left me alone. I could have burnt any incriminating documents I might have had on me."

He coloured. "Perhaps that was why he did it," she thought and was grateful.

"I wouldn't talk like that, if I was you," he said. "You're not found guilty yet, and the less you say the better it will be for yourself at the trial."

She did not reply. She had not yet considered the sequel to an arrest, and it gave her food for reflection. Of course, she would be tried. When thieves and drunkards were arrested they were tried in a public court. It was horrible to think of having to stand in the dock with hundreds of

people staring, most likely unsympathetic people—and she thought of the aloofness with which her despatches had been hailed by the majority of the recipients. She felt she would rather die than go through with it. "I won't answer any questions," she told herself. "They can just do with me as they like." If she heard her voice in the awful silence of the crowded court she pictured she knew she might break down. She might cry. What a terrible thing it would be if she—she a soldier of the Republic—were to cry before the representatives of the rule she had been fighting against. A passionate longing for the thing to be over, to know her fate seized her.

"When will I be tried?" she asked suddenly after an hour's silence.

The man laid down the paper he had been reading. "As soon as possible, I'd say. Perhaps to-morrow; perhaps not till next week. I don't know what they do in cases like yours, as I'm not long in the Force."

"What will they say I've done? What am I to be tried for?"

"Don't know. Treason, I suppose, it would be called."

"Oh!"

It sounded pretty bad. She might even be hanged or shot. That used to be the punishment for treason. Still the Ulster Volunteers and their

leaders had been committing treason every hour of the day for nearly three years, and none of them had been shot or hanged, or even tried, as she was going to be, so they couldn't very well hang her when those others had got off scot free. With this comforting self-reassurance she began to nod. Twice she woke up just in time to prevent herself from toppling into the fire. The policeman, with his head on folded arms, was sprawling across the table, snoring short, pig-like snores. Her back was aching dreadfully. All her poor tired body asked, was to be allowed to stretch itself on the boarded floor and court forgetfulness in sleep. But in her semi-comatose state she realised that such a position would be undignified, and dawn found her still bobbing over, only to waken every few minutes with a start and then begin nodding again.

The policeman awoke when a bang on the floor overhead told that the representatives of the law were emerging from slumber land. He found his charge wan and wide-eyed and made a futile attempt to regain his dignity as he retreated in answer to a knock on the outer door, to receive the char-lady who "did" for the barrack. As she cleaned the grate and made a fresh fire she eyed Dympna with liveliest curiosity. She was inclined to be conversational, but the sergeant appeared and nipped that inclination in the bud.

After partaking of strong well-brewed tea with an over-generous allowance of sugar, from a stout delph cup (so stout that most of her mouth was taken up with the cup before she arrived at the tea), and equally thick toast, which her guard of the night had made for her himself, and which on that ground she did her best to eat, Dympna was escorted to a waiting motor-car—a covered car—and accompanied by the sergeant and another policeman, they covered what she judged to be about six miles before arriving at their destination, a small town through which she had passed the previous day. They pulled up at the barrack and leaving her in the car with the other policeman the sergeant entered. He emerged with a man whose stripes showed him to be a Head Constable, who spoke kindly enough to her, asking her if she would rather go to his house across the way, where his wife would look after her, or stay in the barrack. Dympna had had enough of police barracks and accepted his offer with alacrity, whereupon after exhorting a promise that she would make no attempt to escape he left her in charge of his wife, who treated her with considerate kindness. From the window she saw the motor move off on the return journey with her escort. She was in new hands.

Dympna spent the next two hours playing with the Head Constable's tiresome, badly behaved

children. At the end of that time he came for her. Outside the barrack was another motor-car and seated in it two strange policemen.

"Might I ask where I am bound for now?" queried the girl calmly.

"You are going to the county jail for the present," the Head answered in as reassuring tones as he could muster.

Dympna's heart failed her, but her set white face betrayed no emotion. By this time a rumour had spread among the people of the little town and a crowd was gathering round the car. Before entering Dympna asked suddenly, "May I buy a toothbrush?"

"I'll get you one," said one of the policemen, getting out. He crossed to the chemist's shop and returned with the required article. She thanked him; got in beside the driver; said good-bye to the Head Constable, and the silent, curious crowd stood back from the car as it snorted and glided away down the street.

Never till her dying day would Dympna Donnelly forget that drive through the green smiling hills and dips; past the narrow, placid, winding canal with the pretty lock houses on its banks; through tunnels of trees with the sunlight making pictures on the white road through their new little tender green leaves. Never before had she loved this smiling Ulster as she loved it to-day, when she

was about to be shut away from it, just as she had regained it. On they flew through the outskirts of the historic county town whose every stone is hallowed with associations of all that was great and grand when the Island of Saints and Scholars was at its zenith, but which is now the stronghold of those who if they know its history at all, know it only to deride or ignore it ; past the prosperous linen mills within whose precincts no Catholic may earn his bread ; past the gaudy red brick mansions occupied by their owners and the garrison people and other prosperous and intensely respectable inhabitants ; through the picturesque hilly town and past the two leading hotels, one Catholic, whither priests and Catholic commercial travellers wend their steps ; the other Protestant, where all other religious bodies put up ; and lastly down the long shady Mall, lined on either side by the comfortable-looking, solid houses that were to the girl singularly expressive of the respectable Presbyterianism that sallies out to church on Sunday afternoons in sombre raiment and black kid gloves, and in the evenings bars every form of levity but the singing of hymns.

At the end of the Mall they turned into a square on one side of which stood a long, heavy dark grey building with myriads of tiny barred windows. There were two entrances and at the far one they stopped. As they passed through the high iron

gates with the spiked tops the girl dug her nails into her palms to keep from crying out. The door before which they halted had an outer gate-like part of iron, but the bars were closer than in a gate ; and an inner door of sheet iron studded with huge nails. In answer to the policeman's ring there was a clanging of keys and bolts and chains ; the inner door swung open and a uniformed warder surveyed them through the bars. On seeing the policemen he opened the gate-like door and they entered, and both doors closed behind them. They were in a square hall with cold stone floor and bare whitewashed walls. Opening out of this were a couple of waiting-rooms and two long stone corridors. Down one of these a wardress was coming towards them. She wore a tightly fitting blue uniform and a depressing white cap. She was not old, but she retained an immobile and unrelaxing countenance as she took Dympna into her charge. When her height had been ascertained and the head warder had vainly endeavoured to find a colour for her eyes, eventually noting them down as brown, the woman marched her along the corridor and through other equally stony corridors, past numerous doors with small spy holes covered on the outside, till they came to one which was standing open. The dead silence and the hollow echo of their steps through the emptiness of the

place had set the girl's nerves on edge, and for the first time in her life she was on the verge of hysteria. The wardress showed her how to pull out the wooden bed from the wall, explained that she was supposed to polish her tin basin at least once a day and left her. The key turned in the lock and the echo of the woman's steps died away in the distance. Dympna Donnelly was in jail.

## CHAPTER XX

FOR over an hour Dympna sat without moving on the one unyielding wooden chair her cell contained. For the moment something that was very like despair had taken hold of her. This then was the end ! This cell in which there was just room to move and no more. That heavy locked door with the hole at which spying curious eyes might appear at any moment. This small well-sealed box that, in spite of its sealing, was deprived of all privacy. She was still sitting in the same position, irresponsible, immovable, when the wardress returned at four o'clock with her tea, for she was a non-convicted prisoner and would fare accordingly. When she had gone Dympna examined curiously the dark brown liquid in the large tin porringer and the chunk of black prison bread. She smelt the former at a careful distance, but its smell resembled nothing she had ever known. She began to realise that she was hungry, desperately hungry. She pulled off a piece of the bread. It was sour and tasted most disagreeably. The brown liquid she could not bring herself to investigate. When the wardress returned she remonstrated with her.

" You know you must eat, or you will be ill. Why didn't you drink your cocoa ? "

" Oh, was it cocoa ? " asked Dympna, displaying some interest.

" Of course."

" It looks more like bog water," she replied, again losing interest. " Can't I have tea ? "

" That's the regulation fare and you can't have anything else. The convicted prisoners get much worse."

" Then I hope I'll die before I'm convicted. It's most likely that I shall, as I can't eat that stuff."

" You'll soon get your appetite," said the woman drily. " Hunger's a good sauce."

" But I'm hungry now—and cold. I'm simply frozen. Isn't there a warmer cell than this ? "

" I'll see about something better to-morrow," the woman said more kindly. Dympna had removed her cap and she looked such a child sitting crouched up, her feet on the rung of the chair, her small cropped head resting on her hands.

At eight o'clock came the wardress again, this time with the same tin porringer filled with blue watered milk. This Dympna drank reluctantly. It was anything but palatable but she was thirsty. " Why not leave out the water ? I'd rather have less and have it neat," she remarked.

"It's the regulations," was the apologetic reply.

"Oh, dear!" sighed the prisoner.

There was no sleep for Dympna that night. The mattress on which she lay was as hard as a board, and it gave her pains all over her body. She was shivering with cold too, although she had piled all her clothes on top of the jail blankets. Strangely enough all that had happened in the beginning of the week seemed to have slipped her mind. She thought only of her mother, to whom her arrest would be a dreadful shock. There would be the shock too of her leaving the convent, though that would receive little attention in the light of subsequent events. Of the two, Dympna knew that her mother would suffer much more than she herself would. Jail was bad enough from the inside, but it was a living horror from the outside to one of her class, who would magnify its terrors. Then there was the disgrace. She supposed the people in Clonell would visit that disgrace on her mother, and the thought cut her to the heart. She did not know whether she would be allowed to write home, but if she were, she could say very little because of the prying eyes that would read her letter.

The following day was Sunday and she attended Mass in the prison chapel. She tried to pray. She was so terribly in need of prayer! but her eyes would not leave the faces of those around her, the

faces of the convicted men and women prisoners, faces reckless and abandoned, sullen and obstinate, and the vague, placid countenances of the mentally deficient, the scum of the three or four counties to which the gaol extended its hospitality. If she were convicted would she grow like them? she wondered. But in her heart she did not expect to be convicted. They did not convict the Ulster rebels, so they could not face the world and mete out a different treatment to her. The Howth gun-running crossed her mind, but she did not want to think of that. She would not think of it. No, they couldn't do anything to her.

After Mass the priest was allowed to see her alone and he was deeply touched by the bright hopeful spirit of the child, as he inwardly considered her.

"I had forgotten to count on you, Father," she said gaily. "It makes all the difference in the world your being able to see me. I'm worrying about my mother," and forthwith out came the whole story of her leaving the convent, though she only just touched on the events of the week. "Do you think you could write to mother and tell her what has happened?" she pleaded. "I couldn't bear it—from here."

"As it concerns only your spiritual affairs, yes, I think I am justified in letting her know the reason of your leaving the convent. You will be

allowed, however, to write and let her know your whereabouts. You have heard the news ? "

" No," quickly. " Dublin. About Dublin ? "

" The Volunteers have surrendered—unconditionally."

She swayed slightly. " Of course, I ought to have known that they could not hold out—but I thought they would fight till the end."

" In most places they did. They gave in, only because the citizens were starving. There was no bread—they couldn't stand out against the cry of the people, though they would have gone down to the last man against the guns."

" And— ? "

" They have all been taken prisoners."

" The wounded ? " breathlessly.

" The wounded are still in the hospitals—except a few of the leaders."

" Ah ! "

" You had friends ? "

She nodded dumbly.

" Poor child. I'm sorry you were mixed up in it. It was a mad thing altogether."

She blazed up. " When men like those who were responsible for it knew it was necessary, don't you think it was something more than a mad freak ? Haven't you seen in these years since the beginning of the war that it was that or death for Ireland ? Ah ! one day soon you will understand. Mixed

up in it ! Why till the day I die I will thank God for letting me take even the smallest part in it."

The priest did not reply. He was hoping she would not pay too dearly for that part.

"Would you like me to send you in the papers to see how things are going ? You may have newspapers for the present."

"Until I'm convicted," she replied, smiling wanly. "I'd love them, Father."

As he was leaving she asked him, "When do you think I shall be tried ? "

"I don't know at all, but I should imagine pretty soon."

"I hope so. It's the suspense that's worst."

But days passed and still Dympna was untried. Her first question when the wardress entered her cell each morning was, "When am I to be tried ? " When, once a day, the head warder made his rounds it was the same. Always she received the same answer, "I don't know." The head warder, a grey-bearded kindly official, was loth to stay for a chat now and again. He was devoured with curiosity about his prisoner. Dympna took advantage of him in this mood. On the morning after the Chaplain's visit she asked him :

"On what charge am I here ? "

"I can't answer that," he replied.

"Do you think I'll get a heavy sentence ? " she persisted.

"Can't tell. It's according to what you're convicted of. Now, if it was for mobilising," and he looked hard at her, "it would be a serious thing."

That was all the information she could extract. And she had really been mobilising. She had done more than deliver her despatch and pass on. She had indeed begged of them to mobilise. Now she knew that they had been right in their decision. They would have been too late to help.

The days in confinement seemed of interminable length. She had one hour's exercise each morning in the gravelled courtyard surrounded by a high wall, during which the regulations forbade her to sit, but insisted on the prisoner walking round and round till her head began to spin and her legs to ache. The rest of the day she spent in her cell, and the event for which she lived was the arrival of the daily paper, sent in by the Chaplain, and well thumbed and scrutinised by the attendants before it reached her. She had become curiously hardened. She read, dry-eyed, the word-pictures of hundreds of boys and men tramping silently on to the gangways of cross-channel boats, and watching the shores of the beautiful land who had taken her toll from their generation, too, fade as they sailed into the mist to exile. She read of the bombs and incendiary shells and armoured cars that those few hundreds had stood out against, the ruthlessness that left Dublin a city of the dead.

And still she remained as it were but an interested outsider. It was that her brain had become numbed by the suspense, and the monotonous, soul-crushing life, that in most persons of more than animal intelligence is productive only of criminal results. In these days Dympna's thoughts were mostly of Seumas Gallagher, though she tried to keep his image very far down in her heart. She dared not break down, or disgrace for an instant the cause for which she was suffering, by giving way to the despair that hovered over her night and day. She looked in vain for his name among those deported to English and Welsh prisons, and this she hoped portended his safety.

It was on the fifth day after her arrest—and it seemed to her to be years instead of days that had passed since then—that Dympna's brain was jarred into action. When the wardress came to take her for her exercise she brought the *Independent*. Something in her expression, a curious, prying sort of look, made the girl toss it aside without opening it.

“Wouldn't you like to look at the paper before going out ? ” the woman asked.

This unusual concession convinced Dympna that it contained something of unusual moment and she determined to wait till she was alone to learn its contents.

“No, I'll keep it for the afternoon,” she replied.

As they went along the stone passage, past rows of cells like her own, she saw that the last of these was open. When she reached it she stopped and a shudder passed over her body. Walls and floor were a dull brownish drab. There was nothing within. Not even a shadow to vary the awful horror of that drab gloom. Instinctively she knew it was a padded cell.

The high walls of the prison yard could not keep out the warm sunshine on this glorious May day, but it fell unheeded on the brown-red, bent head of the girl whose flagging footsteps resounded unevenly on the cement path. The horror of that ghastly room refused to leave her. "If this awful suspense goes on much longer, perhaps I shall go mad," she repeated over and over again to herself, until "I shall go mad" throbbed through her head in time to her step. If her punishment had been planned by a fiendish savage, it could not have been more cruel than that she was undergoing, an untried prisoner in an Irish jail. For what is agony of body to agony of mind?

Not till after her dinner of a mess of boiled split peas and two potatoes which she ate with a spoon —knives and forks being unknown commodities in jail, fingers and spoons only being allowed—and she was alone did Dympna dare to open the newspaper. To be exact she did not even open it

then. She lifted it to open it and in doing so glanced down between the separated pages. The leader headings were not in the usual form. Right across the top was a line of large black print ; very large and very black. It said :

**"REBELLION LEADERS EXECUTED  
YESTERDAY AT DAWN."**

She did not faint. She did not do anything that might have been expected of her. She just stood stock still, the paper held loosely in her hand, her eyes smouldering with anger, which suddenly blazed. " Damn them," she said vehemently. " Now they're in the arena. They've flung off their sheep's clothing of veiled injustice and honied hypocrisy with a vengeance, but would to God ! the disclosure had cost a less terrible price——"

Her monologue was cut short. It was the head warden on his daily round. " I'm talking to myself for want of somebody else to talk to," she said with a hard laugh.

" There's many of 'em as does that," he replied good-humouredly.

" God ! So I'm one of 'em," she muttered as the key grated in the lock and she was alone again.

She could not bring herself to look again at the paper. She was afraid of the names that would

appear under those large black letters ; afraid of the effect they would have upon her. She would wait till she was left alone for the night, when only God would witness her misery.

And when the wardress had taken away the watered milk that she had not touched and locked up for the night, Dympna opened the paper, and steadily, unflinchingly she read the names of the little band of men who had been shot in the cold grey dawn, that was not cold enough or grey enough to cool their hot patriot hearts. She read them twice and then returned to the third name. John Gallagher. They had shot John Gallagher ! A great choking sob escaped her. "But—but," she kept saying jerkily. That last sight of him in the G.P.O. as he was borne past her was fixed in her mind. No, she was too tired to understand. But by degrees she began to grasp that Seumas was not among them. Then mechanically she passed on to the names of those killed in the fighting. They were given alphabetically and near the top was that of Peter Duncan. It was the first thing to touch Dympna's heart with the sorrow that brings tears of relief. "Poor, poor Anne," she sobbed, and burst into tears. All night long she cried till dawn and then she slept and sleep wiped away the traces of her weakness, and the curious wardress only saw a white wan face under the curls that were fast becoming an

unmanageable mop, and confided later in the day to a colleague : " She's queer and hardened ! I don't believe she minds being in jail a bit. Except for asking when she is going to be tried, she hasn't bothered about anything since the first day or so. You'd think she'd cry at self, but not a bit of it."

Those tears brought peace to Dympna and the news that day by day was disclosed made her not only resigned to her fate, but all her young heart was glad to suffer so little when others had paid with their lives for that week, that was later to be deemed the cross-roads in the history of her land, and she set herself to see the brightest side of things.

That same day she was escorted to the bathroom for a hot bath. She managed to barricade the door inside with a chair and turned on the water which to her delight was boiling. Unfortunately it was only when the bath was nearly full that she discovered there was no cold water and she had perforce to sit and wait till it cooled. It was a long wait and the wardress outside was dancing with impatience when Dympna, gurgling with laughter, explained through the keyhole what had happened.

" I was beginning to think you were trying to drown yourself," came the tart response, and the prisoner could be heard inside laughing, laughing,

a low liquid laugh that sounded full of the joy of life. The woman on guard did not try to understand it. The girl inside did not understand it herself.

She was allowed to receive two letters a month and one had already come from her mother. The passionate joy of having her back in the world, even in jail, displayed in it made Dympna realise more than ever her thoughtlessness in offering her mother no clear explanation of her reason for entering the convent. "We are all praying for your release," she wrote. "Keep your heart up, we will not pray in vain." But Dympna no longer needed such encouragement. She was resigned, ready to do a life sentence, in spite of the horrors she knew to be before her, in the spirit of sacrifice that had hitherto moulded her life; ready to give of her all if by doing so she could win one more soul from apathy, as the execution of her leaders had already won hundreds.

She had been in prison a fortnight when one day she was told her mother had called and that she might see her. She was led out through two tiny yards with cells ranged on either side, like loose boxes, only that loose boxes were as a rule more cheerful in appearance. Into one of these she was marshalled. It was about four feet square and had no window, the light coming in through the open door. She stood in the background while

a wooden structure resembling a five-barred gate was closed in front of her. Outside this sat the matron on a stiff-backed wooden chair and outside the matron was arranged a high cage of netting wire. Dympna eyed these preparations with amusement.

"I often wondered how the animals feel caged up in the Zoo with people gazing in at them, but I know now," she said with a grin, to which the dignified personage made no response.

To see her daughter in such a position gave Mrs. Donnelly a rude shock, as she concluded that this was the cell occupied by her all the time. It was with a tremendous effort she kept from breaking down, for in the girl with the hollow eyes and sunken cheeks the Dympna of old was nowhere visible.

"Haven't you anything to sit on?" asked the mother in a low, strained voice.

It was an unusual greeting after two years' separation. Dympna explained that she was there only to receive her visitor, something special being proper to the occasion, but the lynx eyes of the matron, now on one face, now on the other, made conversation an impossibility. At last she looked at her watch as a sign that the prescribed quarter of an hour was nearly up.

May I send my daughter books or eatables while she is still untried? I have heard to-day that it ought to be allowed."

"Yes, it is allowed. We examine them of course. You could arrange to have her meals sent in. No cooking can be done at the jail," she volunteered graciously enough.

"That is a great relief. You look half starved, Dympna."

"Oh! I'm all right. They've all been very good to me here," replied the girl, which was true. They were as kind to her as the regulations permitted.

"Two minutes more," reminded the matron.

"Have you heard anything about Seumas Gallagher, mother?"

For the first time since she entered the jail there was an under-current of emotion perceptible in the girl's voice. The matron looked interested. Mrs. Donnelly attributed it to the tragic events with which the name was connected and replied, tears glistening in her eyes. "Poor Seumas, perhaps it is as well for him he did not live to know his father's fate. They were everything to each other."

"He is — ?" Dympna could not bring herself to say more. She wanted to shriek, to dash herself against the cold stone walls, but her limbs refused to move.

"We know nothing for sure, but he is reported missing and they say as he was badly wounded, it is most probable that his was one of the many

bodies buried unidentified a few days after the surrender."

One last wild hope flashed through Dympna's brain. "Anne Duncan. He might be with her."

"Anne Duncan is in Mountjoy Jail."

"My God! Help me to bear it. Don't let me go mad. That padded cell! Oh! Why can't I say 'Thy will be done'? Ireland, why can't I say I give him with all my heart? But I can't, and I won't," she said frantically over and over again to herself.

"Time's up." The matron stood up and Dympna realised that her mother was speaking, the little mother who was suffering so much on her account, but who kept up so bravely. But not suffering like her. Oh no, not as she was suffering now. That could not be. That could not be.

"You'll come again, Mother," she pleaded in a shaking voice.

"I shall come to-morrow," said the mother brokenly.

She came on the morrow, but the prisoner was gone.

## CHAPTER XXI

Down the middle of High Street, Clonell, strode a girl, clad in a white suit of Irish tweed, her green cap just showing a fringe of reddish curls. She had the sure step and unconscious assurance of bearing that is often noticeable in people, women especially, who have made for themselves a good position in life, or who have done, and are continuing to do something that is approved by public opinion. There was no mistaking the muddy eyes under the green cap, that were at the present moment oblivious to all around them. It was Dympna Donnelly, as fresh and vigorous as the day she arrived home from school three years ago. She was on her way to the Infirmary to see Bob Gillespie, who since the day he had tumbled somersaults to earn a penny, had become her devoted and persistent admirer, even though she was a Sinn Feiner and he an Orangeman. Bob's father had celebrated the 12th of July by becoming intoxicated, and awoke the following morning to find he had enlisted. He cursed and swore and sent the King and his Recruiting Officers to regions best unmentioned, and finally threatened to turn Sinn Fein,

but it was all no good. He had to go; and Bob was left to the care of the neighbours. Bob, of course, proceeded to get into trouble and a few weeks later, while playing near a threshing machine, in a reckless moment he had thrust his hand under the flying belt. It was caught and so mangled that it had to be amputated. Dympna had been never failing in her attention to the motherless child, and no visiting-day missed her appearance at the hospital with bundles of eatables and toys. At the present moment there was a substantial brown paper parcel under her arm, and her pockets bulged with rosy apples. Had Bob been at large he would probably have been at that moment in Mrs. Donnelly's orchard helping himself to those same apples if opportunity allowed and the police were out of sight.

A month before Dympna had arrived home from Mountjoy Jail whither she had been removed the morning after her mother's visit. Anne Duncan and the other women prisoners had been released the same day, after three months' imprisonment. They had left their mark on Dympna, those three torturous months of waiting for a trial that never came. The suspense had been as much as human being could bear. Day by day had come the reports of courts martial that sentenced men who had done no more than she had done to penal servitude for life. She expected no mercy. She

had known no fear, but there was the continual longing to know her doom and enter it at once. Months—months that would count at the other end—were passing and there were always the faces of the convicts to remind her of the effects of prison life on poor human nature.

Then one day she was told she could go. She was free. It had been altogether astounding. She had left, as in a dream, and outside the prison gates she had found Anne waiting for her and a crowd that cheered them till it could cheer no more ; and kind friends who could not show them enough kindness. Their reception was the first thing to bring to the girl a full sense of her freedom. To make such enthusiasm possible, things of which she then knew nothing had happened. In her astonishment all she could grasp was that Dublin, which in those fatal days had been cold and aloof, had given its sympathy to the cause for which John and Seumas Gallagher had died. But Dublin was Dublin—she hoped little for the rest of Ireland. It was not until she arrived in Clonell that she was fully awakened to the extraordinary change that had taken place all over the country, though on the journey down she had seen everywhere the tricolour of the short-lived Republic in evidence among the people in the train and at the various stations. And Clonell ! Not a Nationalist man woman or child in the town, except those who

were Hibernians, but came to see her and shake hands with her. And the spirit of them ! Where was apathy and mental sloth for tens of years, now with Mangan, though in less beautiful words they were crying aloud :

“Arise ! My slumbering soul, arise !  
And learn what yet remains for thee  
To dree or do !  
The signs are flaming in the skies ;  
A struggling world would yet be free,  
And live anew.”

For them no more blind faith in a Government that made of justice a thing upon which it was ugly to look. A Government that awarded with honours and great place those who flouted it and spat in its face for nigh on four years, and finished the act by precipitating it into war ; and awarded those it had driven to desperation by its injustice, with a hail of bullets in their great, hot hearts, and sent them unthanked and alone to felon graves. And one of them a boy not out of his teens ! While those others, old and wily lawyers, who acted not like him out of the fire of his youth, but with the cool, calculating brains of their years and professions, stood by and smiled and said, “ What mad fools they ! ”

For tens of years these people had watched their children and their children’s children starved out of the land that bore them to people distant lands.

Yet, out of the goodness of their hearts they had given in those first years of war all that was left to them, given freely. And was there one word of thanks, one word of recognition ? No. But they did not care. They did not ask for thanks. All they wanted was justice—the ministering of their own little laws ; the spending of their own money ; the liberty to provide for and educate their own children ; and while they waited patiently, their doom was being sealed ; their nationality undermined ; everything they held sacred being torn to pieces. The veil had been rent aside by that terrible, tragic week. Few people had any sympathy with that week of desperate deeds, but for what it revealed it had become the turning point of their relations with a Government that was a disgrace to its name. It was the ninety-ninth time they had been fooled. If they knew it, there was not going to be a hundredth. The few had known it to be a matter of the life or death of a nation, before. The mass knew it now, and they had determined it was to be life.

Such was the change to which *Dympna* had returned. With it came to her a great purpose in life, the purpose to do as one, whose name she could yet scarcely bear to mention, would have done had he been alive and in Clonell to-day. Under her guidance the local Gaelic League had become a big and flourishing centre and everybody who had

a word of Gaelic in his brain at all made the most of it and was proud to have it on his lips. A great literary and musical revival was already perceptible, and every eye and every heart was aglow with nationality—the thing that has been responsible from the beginning of time, and will be responsible to the end of time, for the things that are greatest and grandest in the history of the world.

The girl had won her opportunity for showing her worth and the people recognised in her generalship something original, compelling, even brilliant. Out of this quick recognition had come her triumph, for just that morning her name had been put forward for co-option on the Town Council. She was, of course, defeated by an Orange majority, but the fact remained that a number of men had considered her—a girl not yet twenty-three—capable of looking after the interests of her town. The Orange opponents, not wishing to be outdone in progressiveness, had also put forward a woman candidate, with success. The newly elected Councillor was the wife of the Resident Magistrate, and sister of Lord Clonell. She was known among the poorer population, Orange and Green, as “ould soup pot,” because she had a habit of paying periodical visits to respectable workers, accompanied by a can of watery soup, which was emptied outside the back door immediately her broad back

was clear of the front one. She never entered any of the houses, having a perpetual dread of fleas and colds in the head, but stood outside the door and told the woman of the house how *she* could live on nine shillings a week, if she had to do so, without grumbling about the price of things, Dympna was quite pleased over the election. With secret joy she awaited the results of Mrs. Mason-Power's official endeavours and speculated as to who would be the first to call her "a blitherin' ould idiot." Behind her back, of course, as she was the wife of the R.M.

"Hello, Dymp! What's the joke?"

Dympna looked up quickly. Lilian Reilly was coming towards her up the street.

"Joke!" queried Dympna blankly as they met.

"You were grinning for all you were worth."

"Was I? Oh, I suppose I was indeed. I was thinking of Mrs. Mason-Power, and wondering how she will succeed in her new duties."

"She'll be a nuisance to the town. I believe she is talking so much already that those who voted for her are eating off their heads now. It was just to vex our crowd that they put her in over you. I wish them joy of her. By the way, Sydney Hamilton is home wounded." Lilian watched Dympna closely, but she displayed only the friendliest interest.

"Poor Sydney, I am so sorry. Is he badly wounded?"

"Very. They don't expect him to live. He's had his left leg amputated. It seems he was out of danger when they moved him here, but he took a turn for the worse last night. There are six wounded officers in the infirmary now."

"I am going there to see Bob Gillespie. If I had known Sydney was there I'd have brought him some roses."

This was too much for Lilian. "Oh, I thought you were off with him?"

"Off?" repeated Dympna in well-feigned astonishment. A clock struck three and she exclaimed with anxiety that sounded perfectly genuine, "Good gracious! Three o'clock. I'll have to run all the way to get to the infirmary in time to see Bob. We'll meet at the League to-night. Slan leath," and she hurried away.

She was much disturbed by Lilian's report of Sydney Hamilton's return wounded. Though her heart was buried in an unknown grave, she was genuinely fond of Sydney and hated to think of his suffering.

When she reached the ward she found Bob up and all agog with excitement; so much so that he only deigned to glance at his bi-weekly parcel.

"A' say, your boy 's here," he informed her.

"I know you are," returned Dympna, laughing.

"A don't mane me; a mane Hamilton—Sydney Hamilton."

"Oh! Really!"

"Aye, and a went in to see him this mornin' when the nurse wasn't here and a told him you were comin' to see me the day, and he give me two bob, and a promised to send you in when you came. So go now—he said he'd give me another two if you'd go—it's the next dure but one on the right-hand side."

"I'm afraid I can't go without the nurse's permission, Bob. No, no," as Bob made a movement, "not your nurse. It would have to be his. Perhaps he'll give you the two bob in any case. You can tell him I am very sorry to hear he is ill."

"A don't believe he'll give me two bob for that," said Bob dismally. "Oh, here's his nurse comin'. She's a cross ould devil—not like mine."

Dympna hoped the nurse did not hear Bob's stage whisper. She looked frigid enough at any rate as she came to a standstill beside the small patient's visitor.

"Captain Hamilton wishes to see you, Miss Donnelly," she announced coldly, having a good sound hatred for anything Catholic, while Sinn Fein she regarded as a bull a red rag. "He must

not be excited as he is in danger, but as he has taken this fancy to see you it is better to humour him."

Dympna rose and followed the nurse silently, much to Bob's delight.

It was a long ward, and the space between the beds was wide enough to drown a low conversation from the next patient. The bed towards which Dympna was led was at the far end and it was screened off from the others. Five pair of admiring eyes were fixed on the white-clad girl who was so obviously unconscious of them. There was curiosity, too—much curiosity. This was the beautiful Sinn Feiner of whom the little boy from the next ward had given them a long and enthusiastic account that morning when the nurse was downstairs.

He was watching for her, propped up against the pillows behind the cages that kept the bed-clothes from what was left of his poor limb. His eyes were feverishly bright and blue and the hand that caught hers burning.

"Dympna, oh, Dympna!" was all he said.

She sat down beside him, her hand still in his, and the tears rushed to her eyes. She was thinking of him on the night she first met him, handsome, debonair, and a man every inch of him. And now! He was but a wreck.

"I am so sorry, Sydney," she said in a low voice.

"Not much left of me, Dympna, eh?"

"There'll be enough for your friends, Sydney. You will get well and strong and they will never let you miss what you have given."

"There's only one friend who matters, and it's you, Dympna. You know that?"

She did not answer. She was afraid to hurt those feverish blue eyes.

"That's what I wanted to tell you," he continued, watching her hungrily. "I had endless trouble to-day to get my people to leave me alone for this hour. I am ungrateful, perhaps, but love is selfish. They say I am dying, Dympna—I heard them this morning." In answer to her sob, "I won't die, if you will give me something to live for. Oh, Dympna, I don't want to die. I want so much to live. I ought not to have asked you—a man wouldn't with this," pointing to the cage. "But I'm only a weakling now and I can't stand out against this awful want of you, that you started at that blessed dance."

Dympna's brain was in a whirl. She did not know what to answer. His eyes were growing brighter and brighter. "Sydney, dear, I must not excite you. Can't we leave this till you are stronger?"

He shook his head dumbly.

"Are you very sure?" she asked with unconscious cruelty, then pulled herself up. "I mean about this," she said, pointing to the small enamel badge with the Republican tricolour on the lapel of her coat. "I don't know if you know all——"

"Everything," he said. "Can't we leave this awful creed and political business out of it for once?" This impatiently.

How well she knew the impossibility of that. How well he, too, would realise it at another time. There was still a line between the Orange and Green—now a white one—a broad white one, so broad that as yet only a few had dared to cross it. Its whiteness was a happy omen, but one that might not bear fruit in her day or his. She dreaded his questioning her feelings in the matter; she would hate to act a lie, but if it meant his life, what could she do?

"I must not tire you now, Sydney. I will come again," she said gently.

"Then it's going to be all right, Dympna?" he asked happily.

She nodded, and changed the subject. "I've often wanted to tell you about that day I met you in Dublin—on the bridge. It wasn't because it was you I managed to get over, Sydney. I would have reached the other side no matter who was there. I was afraid you might have blamed yourself, and me for trading on your friendship,"

"I did not blame you. I knew quite well afterwards that you would have got through that day, no matter who was in charge, as there was a narrow unguarded lane quite close to the bridge which you would eventually have tried and of which I only learnt some time after."

"Oh, dear, that is a relief," she sighed and stood up. "Now you must get strong and well quickly." She talked to him as if he were a child, for his helplessness had made him childlike, even in his love-making ; it had been so easy to evade him. He roused suddenly out of that mood and she saw the man in his eyes.

"Won't you kiss me, Sweetheart ?" he pleaded in the old tones.

The girl closed her eyes for an instant, and a shudder passed over her, happily unnoticed by the wounded man. She was seeing again the attic lighted with the glow of burning houses and the gaze of those haunting, black eyes. It was only for the space of a second, and she was about to move nearer to him when the curtain moved and his mother entered. He looked annoyed, but there was radiant happiness in his eyes as he bade her good-bye. "It's going to be good to live," he whispered, and she was gone.

For the moment a great ordeal had been spared her ; a sacred memory was still unsullied. But what was to be the outcome of it all ? She could

not be unfaithful to that love of one short hour.  
Nothing could ever wipe away that memory.  
And yet, if it meant his life, what was she to  
do ?

## CHAPTER XXII

MRS. DONNELLY opened the door of Dympna's room softly. It was the noonday sun that streamed in through the yellow window blind which was still drawn. She bent anxiously over the sleeping girl. It was very unusual for Dympna to sleep till this hour, but she was loth to awaken her. As if the girl felt her gaze she opened her eyes widely, then sat up without any preliminary rubbing of eyes or momentary stupidity.

"What time is it, mother?"

"After twelve o'clock. You *have* slept a time."

"I—I didn't sleep last night." She wore a troubled look as she said this.

"How was that, acushla?"

She did not answer. It had been such a terrible night, those long hours of argument between fate and love; those heart-rending prayers for help to avoid the forfeiting of ideals, principle, self-respect. She had not arrived at anything after all the struggle. Why must her poor soul be always troubled—never at peace—she had cried rebelliously in her heart almost every minute since her visit to the infirmary the previous afternoon.

She was wondering now whether her mother might understand and help her. It would be such an overwhelming relief to confide in her. She was looking at her thoughtfully as she stood beside the window, youthful and happy again now that Dympna was restored to her, debating as to how she would begin when her mother, without turning her gaze from the street below, said :

“ Dympna, you will be sorry to hear that poor Sydney Hamilton is dead.”

There was silence—dead silence. A low moan brought her to the bedside in one stride. The girl’s head was under the bed-clothes, her body all drawn up into a lump of agony, and long moaning sobs came with painful slowness. It was a reaction as soul-racking as that which had caused it.

. . . . .

In the exquisite silvery, misty haze of a September afternoon Dympna strode along the road where once Seumas Gallagher had pursued her in the heat of his admiration. Opposite a five-barred gate she halted, mounted it, dropped over on to the other side and turned her steps towards the Rath on the top of the hill. The tall slim trees that topped it were aglow with gold and brown, with here and there patches of green, that still lingered to be kissed by the last rays of the summer sun. She stopped to rest as she reached the hedge that

divided the rath from the field in which she stood, and remained drinking in the beauty of the scene below; thinking perhaps of the day she had stood there beside Seumas Gallagher and poured out her girlish indignation over the wrongs of the poor. The Maguires' cottage, nestling in the hollow under the big chestnut tree, looked as only a mud cabin with its thatched roof and uneven white-washed walls and its corkscrew of brownish blue smoke can look. None of the glaring reds of the English country cottages here, just the refining, simple shades of nature, that are part of a refined spiritual people, and the life around them. Along the bottom of the field a stream was gurgling and swashing over its shallow, stony bed. On the other side of the hedge from it the hilly white road rambled in and out, up and down, at its own sweet will through the soft undulations of mother earth. The fields were bereft of their harvest, but they stretched away upwards to an uneven jagged horizon on every side as variegated as if their fertile bosoms were at their prime. Their queer little forms were unusually boldly outlined by their straggling and trim dividing hedges, whose glowing autumnal tints grew blacker at every more distant field, till the haze made them silver streaks near the sky. There were yellow fields of stubble, fields left fawn by the hay-mowers, fields of soft new emerald grass with pointed hayricks riding coquet-

tishly on their curved breasts, and fields of rich black and blue and brown soil, fresh from the spade of the potato diggers, with fitful spurts of flame from mounds of burning stalks. Cart-wheels jolted and rattled on the road below, and the rhythmic beat of a horse's hoofs sounded from where the road rose to kiss the dull, restful grey of the heavens. A red bread-cart, with large white lettering, drawn by a white horse was approaching, the driver on top hitting sharply against the sky.

"Roisín dhu, you take much, but we have much left when we have yourself," said the girl aloud to the hills and sky.

She pushed her way up through a gap in the hedge into the rath and began climbing the steep bank, the velvety moss coming away in lumps in her hands as she pulled herself up. Her object was to cross to the other side of the fort and go home another way. She was seating herself on the edge of the outer ring preparatory to sliding down, when she suddenly pulled herself up again. Sitting in the hollow between that and the next earthen ring was a man, who by all appearance belonged to the tramp class. He had his back towards her and all she could see was a dusty coat and a battered, rakish hat. Tramps were about the only commodity of which Dympna stood in awe and she

was contemplating a retreat when this queer individual from the back view began to whistle. What was it he was whistling ? Of course. He was in a happy mood, this tramp, evidently, for he stopped whistling and began to hum. Then he broke into song. In a musical tenor voice his song breathed softly in and out the trees of the old rath.

“And if when all a vigil keep,  
The West’s asleep, the West’s asleep,  
Alas ! and well may Erin weep,  
That Connaught lies in slumber deep.  
But hark ! some voice in thunder spake,  
The West’s awake ! the West’s awake !”

The girl put her arm round a tree trunk to support limbs that were shaking with terror. Thick drops of sweat stood out on her forehead ; for Dympna was listening to a voice from the dead. There was panic in her heart that bade her flee, but her feet refused to move and her eyes refused to leave that rakish, disreputable figure that in its mockery took on the voice of the man she mourned.

The song came to an end. He moved uneasily ; then, as if he felt her gaze, he turned towards her. He sprang to his feet and his hat fell to the ground revealing a shock of uncut, wavy hair, white with dust. With a bound he was up the bank, clutching, slipping, but coming surely, his black eyes ablaze

in a thin tanned but certainly not a phantom face.

" Ah, gradh mo croidhe," she murmured weakly.

" My girl ! My Black-North Girl." And Dympna was gathered into the tramp's arms.

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